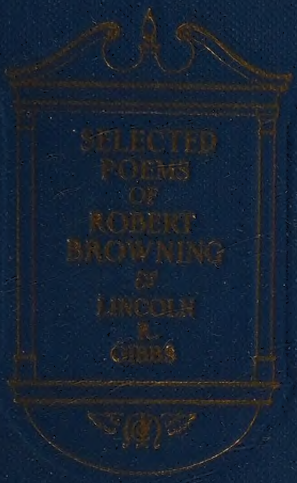
SELECTED
POEMS
OF
ROBERT
BROWNING
BY
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THE MODERN READERS' SERIES
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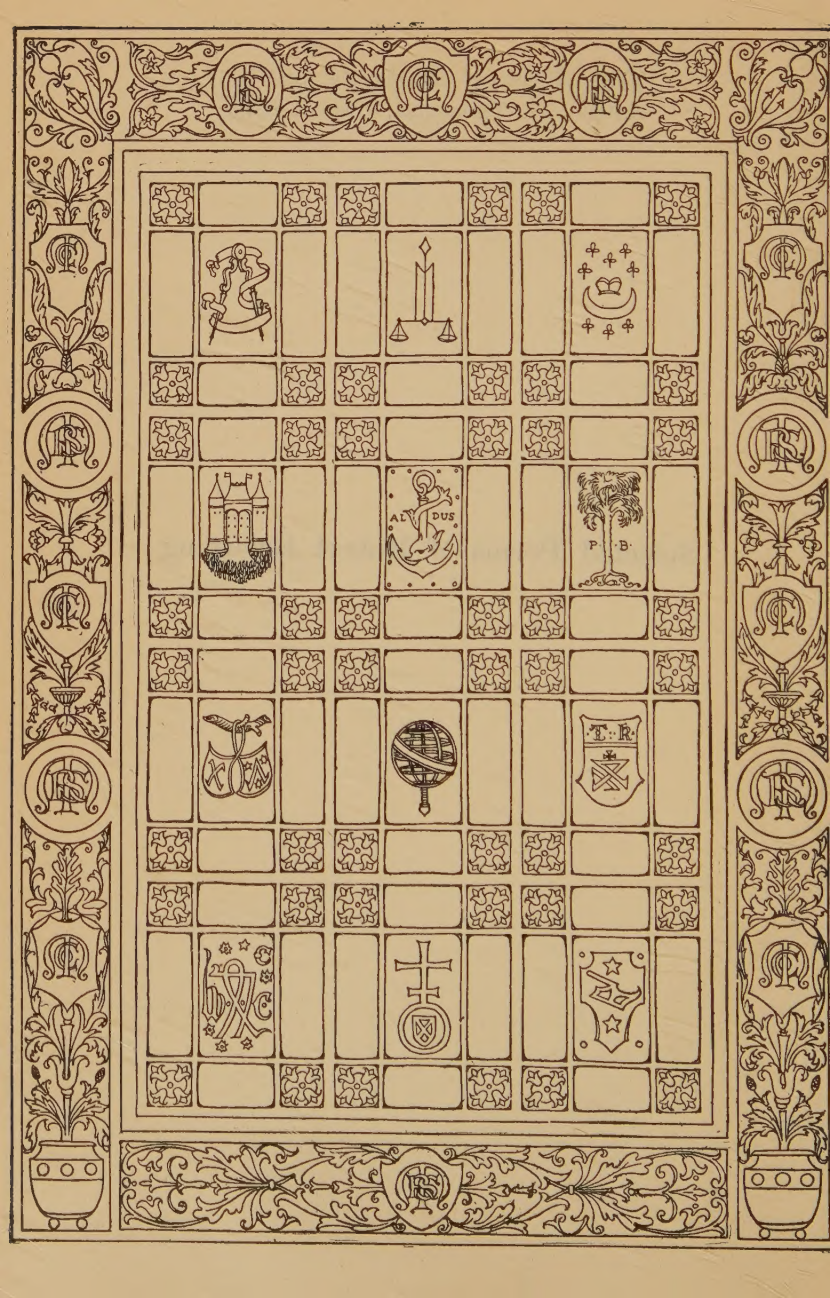
# Selected Poems of Robert Browning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# *Selected Poems of*
# Robert Browning

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LINCOLN R. GIBBS
*Professor of English in Antioch College*

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# INTRODUCTION

"He died before his youth ended." In another sense these words, written by Browning of Shelley, are true of their author, although his years reached well-nigh to four-score. Through a long life of aspiration, struggle and delayed success, happy love and many friendships, brilliant public honors and far-extended influence, he was a youth in spirit to the end. The best effect of his poetry is that it transmits a large measure of this youthful zest.

Robert Browning was born in his father's suburban house in Camberwell, London, on the seventh of May, 1812. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England—unworldly, unambitious, kind, learned, and artistic. He was a collector of books and prints, something of a scholar, and a versifier in the Eighteenth Century manner. In youth he had enraged his father by giving up a position and prospects of a competence in the British West Indies because he did not approve of slavery. This cost him the paternal support. From him Robert Browning, the poet, inherited a certain quiet, heroic moral integrity. The poet's mother, Sarah Wiedemann, the daughter of a Dundee merchant of German parentage, was a woman of refinement, Puritan dignity, and strong religious instinct. The family became well-to-do; the home was abundantly supplied with books, music, and pictures. Robert, the only son, was free to choose his own course in life, even though the choice fell on the precarious vocation of poetry. The religious tone of the house was that of evangelical Protestantism. Both parents were teachers in the Sunday-school of a small independent congregation in London. Although Browning became very sensible of the intellectual and aesthetic limitations of this form of Christianity and burlesqued them without mercy in "Christmas-Eve," he never passed beyond the influence of his pious father and mother. Through many strange intellectual ad-

ventures he carried the heart of a dissenting British Protestant.

The boy's education went forward almost wholly at home. As a child he attended a private school for a few months, by way of preparation for the day-school of the Rev. Mr. Ready. The story of his withdrawal from the first of these institutions upon the complaints of parents that he monopolised the honors, cannot be fully verified. Beyond question he was a lad of active mind, a leader among his fellows. In youth he received instruction in Greek at the University of London. But the best part of his education was gained at the hands of his father or on his own initiative. In the poem "Development" he draws an attractive picture of one item of his father's teaching. This shows that the elder Browning had a sound and delicate instinct for pedagogy. Masters were brought to the house for music, drawing, French, and other accomplishments. The boy had the run of his father's books; his father's interests were stimulating to him. His education—as that of genius mainly does—developed its own momentum.

In the period of his boyhood Browning could scarcely have escaped the influence of Byron. "Incondita" (a first volume that never passed beyond the manuscript stage), like the first published volume of Tennyson, shows how powerfully Byron stirred the poetic youth of the age. For Browning this influence was neither lasting nor important. The references to Byron in his poetry are almost as contemptuous as those of Carlyle.

Browning became acquainted with the poetry of Shelley in his early teens. His eye lighted by chance on a volume containing "Queen Mab" and other poems. In Browning's circle Shelley was then almost unknown. Mrs. Browning, however, obtained a complete edition for her son and added the works of Keats. The influence of Shelley was probably the most important literary influence of Browning's youth; under it he became for a time an atheist and a vegetarian. Although both these excesses vanished without violent storms or stresses, permanent effects of the reading of Shelley remained. In his essay on Shelley (written in 1852) Browning describes the subjective poet: "He is . . . impelled

to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the one above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends things in their absolute truth, —an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul." This ambitious philosophical conception of poetry is Browning's own. It is balanced, in his work, by humor, respect for concrete facts, and a more robust, wholesome temperament than Shelley possessed; but it was in part derived from the earlier poet. Two enthusiastic passages of Browning's first published poem, "Pauline," are addressed to Shelley—those beginning—

"Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever,"

and—

"Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love."

"Memorabilia" is a further indication of the depth, and a suggestion of the nature, of Shelley's influence on Browning.

The influence of Keats is not easy to define. But references to him in "Popularity" and "One Word More" express admiration, though they do not enable one to point out any trait of Browning's genius that Keats helped to develop. The innocent sensuousness of Keats is discernible in Browning, but this Browning had by nature.

Browning could not remember when he began to make verses. By the age of twelve he had accumulated a fairly ponderous manuscript volume of them. Is it surprising that his mother thought these poems worthy of publication? Through her they came to the attention of Miss Eliza Flower and her sister, Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams, the author of "Nearer, my God, to Thee." These ladies showed the volume to the Rev. W. J. Fox, the editor of a religious and literary journal. Mr. Fox wisely discouraged the publication of "Incondita" (as Browning had named his book); but the young poet was in this way introduced into a friendly and stimulating literary circle.

Browning's first publication was "Pauline," which appeared in 1833. Its immaturity and vagueness are apparent enough even in the amended version that the author made in 1868. No lover of Browning's mature poetry feels that

"Pauline" is negligible, and no sensible person recommends it to a beginner. It has magnificent passages and a certain diffusive beauty everywhere, but it lacks Browning's force, humor, and realism. With "Paracelsus" (1835) and "Sordello" (1840) it should be studied as an experiment made by a young genius toward finding his true course.

In November, 1835, Browning became acquainted with the actor Macready. The acquaintance led at once to the writing of "Strafford," Macready suggesting the subject. Ultimately it resulted in the composition of several stage plays by Browning. Among them are "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon," "Colombe's Birthday," and "The Return of the Druses." In spite of the dramatic character of Browning's genius these plays were not markedly successful on the stage. They must now be read as closet dramas. Their comparative failure cannot be attributed to the bad taste of the public. To say that Browning is too dramatic for the stage sounds like a wilful paradox, but it is substantially true. The action he represents is intense; his characters are full of life. But the action is that of the spirit; the visible effects are not plainly presented. The action of the first part of "Pippa Passes" is of the very essence of drama, but even it is scarcely theatrical. The moment of decision has Browning's full interest; he makes the lines converge upon it, he suggests its consequences. But the outward situation has little to occupy the senses. Browning's plays require a sort of attention difficult for a theatrical audience to give. His interest in human nature was too ethical to express itself naturally in popular plays. After a brave struggle he gave up the ambition of writing for the stage; his dramatic sense found appropriate expression in the monologue.

Browning had a long struggle for recognition. The publication of "Sordello" in 1840 imposed a handicap on the author's reputation. Its obscurity discouraged the most patient readers. As a means of making way with the public Browning adopted a suggestion of his publisher—that he issue his poems in inexpensive pamphlets. The series was named "Bells and Pomegranates," a title derived from the decorations of the Lævite's garment, as described in the book of Exodus. By this title the poet meant to suggest a blend of

music and wisdom. Eight numbers were issued, beginning in 1841 and continuing till 1846. In this form were first published many of Browning's greatest poems, such as "Pippa Passes" and the first part of "Saul." But the series did not establish him securely in popular favor. His vogue rests mainly on later publications—on "Men and Women" (1855), "Dramatis Personæ" (1864), and "The Ring and the Book" (1868-1869).

The marriage of Browning is the most biographical event of his life, *i.e.* it is the event that best exemplifies his character. Its inner significance is to be found in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese" and in Robert Browning's "One Word More," "By the Fireside," "Prospice," and the dedication of "The Ring and the Book." Biographers sometimes commit an indiscretion by placing literal accounts of the love-affairs of poets in close proximity with their poetic idealisations of the same facts; the contrast sometimes begets cynicism. No such result is to be feared in the case of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Every page of love poetry written by either is enhanced by a knowledge of their courtship, marriage, and wedded life.

The two poets became acquainted by reading each other's verses before they met in person. The lady, who had been an invalid since girlhood, was kept in seclusion as jealously as a princess of romance. After difficulties and through the mediation of Mr. John Kenyon, Browning's friend and Miss Barrett's cousin, Browning obtained the privilege of calling. The acquaintance soon developed into friendship and love. The consent of the lady's father being out of the question, the lovers were compelled to apply the imprudent lovers'-wisdom that Browning recommends to young people. They took the matter into their own hands, were secretly married on the twelfth of September, 1846, and a few days thereafter eloped to the continent. Notwithstanding the happiness of her marriage, Mrs. Browning never obtained her father's forgiveness. Browning's boldness and judgment were fully justified by the outcome. His wife's health improved, so that within a year of her marriage she was able to travel on donkey-back among the mountains in northern Italy. She was always a delicate woman, and she died at the age of

fifty-five; but it is wholly probable that her happiness and her husband's intelligent care prolonged her life. The Brownings had many interests and tastes in common, in addition to poetry and romantic love. Both were scholars in Greek and translators of Greek drama. Both were deeply interested in the Italian struggle for independence and unity.

Browning survived his wife by more than a quarter of a century. In that period he wrote and published actively, formed many friendships, became a brilliant figure in the society of London, travelled restlessly, and sojourned in various resorts in Normandy, Switzerland, and Italy. His poetry probably touched its highest points in "Men and Women" (1855) and "Dramatis Personæ" (1864), but his fame was greatly increased by the publication of "The Ring and the Book," in 1868 and '69, and the complete edition of his works that soon followed. Indeed, his renown became almost top-heavy. In 1881 the London Browning Society was established. A learned body for the study of a poet still living may easily make the poet ridiculous. The net effect of the work of the London Browning Society and of many similar organisations in England and America has probably been advantageous to Browning's reputation, but these societies have alienated many readers and have emphasised the difficulties of the author overmuch. They have almost buried the poet in moral and philosophical comments. From the first Browning, seeing that he must stand aloof from them, professed himself no Browningite. His humor, humility, and shrewd sense saved him from the dangers of adulation.

Browning's intellectual vigor remained unabated almost to the day of his death. Indeed, the curiosity of the intellect overbalanced imagination. The poet was almost lost in the amateur detective, speculative philosopher, and abnormal psychologist. But the old beauty and dramatic force do not disappear. "Muléykeh" is one of the most spirited narrative poems in English literature, and "Summum Bonum" has the authentic ring of love.

Browning died peacefully in the Palazzo Rezzonico, Venice, the home of his son, December 12, 1889. His last volume, "Asolando," was published in London the same

day. News of the advance demand for copies came to him as he lay dying. The book is justly characterised by Edward Dowden as "an autumn gathering, a handful of fruit and flowers belonging to the Indian summer of his genius." The "Epilogue" is his greeting to the unseen. The volume contains another poem, less lyrical than the "Epilogue," but not less worthy of a place in the author's last volume as a final expression of his manly philosophy of life. This poem is "Rephan," Browning's conclusive assertion that life is good. It is not addressed chiefly to the fortunate and the glorious, but to

> "Brow-furrowed old-age, youth's hollow cheek,
> Diseased in body, sick in soul,
> Pinched poverty, satiate wealth."

To these the poet seeks to demonstrate the superiority of their lot on earth to the changeless perfection of Rephan. The demonstration may not be adequate, but it is wholly in keeping with the tenor of Browning's life of thought and poetry. It attests the fact that a brave man has passed through life finding it good.

Browning once declared that "the right order of things is Philosophy first, and Poetry, which is its highest outcome, afterwards." The Muse seems to be a jealous lady and to punish with severity every preference for a rival, even though it be provisional. Browning has been accepted as a sage and a prophet, discussed, decried, analysed as a leader of thought. A scholar in Philosophy has sought to show that Browning's works are an illustrated edition of the system of Hegel, and an English churchman has given the poet the episcopal benediction as the greatest defender of the Christian faith in the Nineteenth Century. Merited or not merited, these honors obscure Browning's solid worth as a poet. They send readers in false directions and create both prejudices and unreasonable expectations. Although their influence has been on the wane for several years, it is still strong.

It may correct some of these misunderstandings if attention is called to the inventiveness, boldness, and success of Browning's craftsmanship when that is at its best. The plans of "Pippa Passes" and "The Ring and the Book"

are bold to the point of rashness, yet they are wholly successful: they support the author's conceptions with strength and grace. No other designs would have been possible. The treatment of metre and rhyme in "Saul" is virtually original. The long lines, rhyming couplets, and the trisyllabic metrical pattern unite to give the poem majesty. At the same time they meet the varied demands of the theme: the metre adapts itself to argument, pathos, lyrical expression, description of tender pastoral scenes and natural grandeur, as well as to deep religious conviction. Browning's metrical sense has also worked with fortunate boldness in "A Grammarian's Funeral"; the uneven lines and rough rhythms give the poem an appropriate dirge-like character. Other examples of the same metrical skill are to be seen in "A Toccata of Galuppi's," "Abt Vogler," and "Memorabilia."

Browning must have the credit of developing the dramatic monologue as a literary form. In his hands it became a new type. This type is well adapted, not only to the genius of Browning, but to the artistic needs of his generation and our own. It blends the dramatic treatment of character with the expression of general ideas. Sometimes (notably in "Cleon") it suggests an entire civilisation. The form has been adopted, with modifications, by poets very unlike Browning. Its influence is discernible in Robert Frost's "The Self-Seeker" and in E. A. Robinson's "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford."

Even the violent mannerisms of Browning should be regarded with tolerance as evidences, sometimes, of original craftsmanship. They are often experimental. The grotesque polysyllabic rhymes are dramatically justified as successful attempts to suggest some freakish humor. This is true of the strange rhymes of "Old Pictures in Florence." Even the cacophonies that distress the ear are attempts to make language piquant and imitative. The familiar line of "Rabbi Ben Ezra,"—

> "Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?"—

is expressive. It could hardly have been made fluent or melodious. Music itself has significant discords; no reader

of taste desires to restrict poetry to Tennysonian or Swinburnian harmonies.

Browning's worst fault of style is prolixity. "Sordello" is ruined by it. It impairs some of the greatest productions, especially "Paracelsus" and "The Ring and the Book." But this is a fault which Browning shares with some of the most exquisite craftsmen in literature—with Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, and Swinburne. In Browning the cause is not the lack of momentum, the mind wandering feebly in all directions because it has no strength to go forward; it is an overeager interest that darts here and there because it sees, on every side some object that fascinates it. Few readers have so tireless a zest for truth, beauty, and experience. Hence Browning's prolixity fatigues them. It is in fact a serious defect, for poetic art should enable readers to focus attention with serene pleasure on one thing at a time. Dazzling kaleidoscopic changes are too confusing to be greatly in its vein. Unlike Keats, Browning did not learn restraint as he matured. Prolixity appears in some of the great works written at the height of his powers and in his last volume. But the very faults of a master have their interest; they are usually the excess of his good traits. Browning's prolixity shows the richness of his temperament.

What are the main subjects of Browning's poetry? Where do his interests lie? In the second book of "Paracelsus" the poet Aprile utters an enraptured description of the work of artists—sculptors, painters, musicians, poets. The special province of poetry is said to be the inner life of man. Sculpture shows the form, painting the external setting, natural and social. Then comes the turn of poetry.

"When those who looked on pined to hear the hopes
And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,
I would throw down the pencil and the chisel,
And I would speak. No thought which ever stirred
A human breast should be untold; all passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed by desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away

Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well:
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in grand array of words."

The poet is to undertake a survey of the entire world of inner values. The optimistic temper of Browning appears in the tone of the passage. Aprile has no misgivings concerning the beauty of the result, if only the depth of human experience can be sounded and its range represented with adequate sympathy.

In the passage on sculpture there are somewhat definite indications of Browning's special interests as an artist.

"Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
Would I express and clothe in its right form,
Or blend with others struggling in one form,
Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside some strong
Rare spirit fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavoring to subdue it and inform it
With its own splendor."

These lines point to the interest in the dramatic and the grotesque that characterises Browning's treatment of humanity; the passage illustrates his fascinated concern in the struggles that take place in the deep levels of personality. Strong inharmonious natures like Paracelsus, religious thinkers like Blougram, whose mind is a checker-board of doubt and faith, even rascals like Mr. Sludge, whose one sublime conviction is mingled with an alloy of superstition, charlatanism, and hypocrisy—these persons interested Browning far more than did simple victorious natures. His interest in them is not solely that of the seeker of piquant contrasts or even that of the inquisitive student. Browning believed that an enhanced beauty emerges at length from the mingling of discordant strains. His mixed types are more representative of his time and our own than simpler folk would be.

Some persons find in Browning too much doctrine; others find too much color and primitive feeling. Mr. George Santayana is one of those who are offended by an excess of elemental passion. He classes Browning with Whitman as a poet of barbarism, because he does not "domesticate" his passions "either by understanding their cause or by conceiving their ideal goal." Mr. G. K. Chesterton makes a convincing defence of Browning. He concedes the fact but differs wholly with Mr. Santayana as to its value. Poetry must be "simple, sensuous, impassioned." Interpretation, comment, and generalised wisdom do not suffice for it. Its values are direct; it imparts something like the immediate feeling of experience. If this is barbarism, barbarism is a merit—the essential merit—of poetry. And Browning's poetry has that merit in an extraordinary degree. No poem is a more solid mass of vicarious experience than "The Ring and the Book." No poems probe more deeply into the very heart of life than the best of the dramatic monologues—"Andrea del Sarto," "Fra Lippo Lippi," and "Saul." Even a high flight of mystical rapture, like "Abt Vogler," usually begins in the concrete; and Browning's most idealistic reconstructions of the actual world are not completely hidden in the light of thought.

But does not Browning domesticate the passions by conceiving their ideal goal? Such domestication may be as civilising a process as literal home life has been in the history of the race. A conception of some goal of feeling, though no substitute for experience, may enrich experience and redeem it from animalism. Browning's thinking and his moral passion transform the sensuous elements of his poetry. In "Rabbi Ben Ezra," along with a full recognition of the claims of the senses, there is the indication of a distant end.

> "Thy body at its best,
> How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?"

In "Easter-Day" Browning presents a theory of pleasure and the soul. It is the philosophy neither of an ascetic nor of a voluptuary; nor is it an incongruous mixture of the two. It regards all finite satisfactions of the senses, mind, and spirit as moments in a development. Good in them-

selves, they must not be regarded as all-sufficient. They are like the rooms of an inn; their comfort may be enjoyed for a day or two, but to live in them permanently is not well.

First and last, Browning tells many stories of unlawful love. Among them are "The Statue and the Bust," the Ottima-Sebald story in "Pippa Passes," and "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon." The love of Caponsacchi and Pompilia, though innocent, is unconventional. Why is this subject attractive to a poet so rigorous in morals as Browning? Not solely because of its romantic or dramatic interest. Is it not mainly because unlawful love, if it is intense enough, and if there is the least modicum of spirit in it, takes all risks and must in the end surpass itself? Such is the full import of the story of Sebald and Ottima. Their criminal passion is not presented for the sake of its sensational interest, though there is no undue timidity in the treatment; nor is the play a warning to evil-doers. Mr. Chesterton's principle is not wholly adequate—that "all motives are beautiful or present themselves for the moment as beautiful, and therefore all poetry is beautiful," since poetry represents all acts from the angle of motive. Evil motives bear fruit after their kind; or rather, they are a destructive fire, clearing the ground. In the burned space, the seed of an atoning unselfish love finds lodgement. More notably in "The Ring and the Book," the constructive effects of romantic love are indicated. The romance of Caponsacchi and Pompilia is the romance of the redemption of one soul and the development of another. Chivalry, adventure, beauty, and youth lead to something even better than themselves. They give the spirit its opportunity for action. What conception of the ideal goal of passion surpasses this in nobility?

Lincoln R. Gibbs.

# Selected Poems of Robert Browning

# SONGS FROM PARACELSUS

## I

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
  Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
  From out her hair: such balsam falls
  Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
  Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
  Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
  From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

## II

  Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
  A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,

Rude and bare to the outward view,
  But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
  Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
  Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
  And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check
  "The shout, restrain the eager eye!"
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
  And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbor thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!
"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
"Our temple-gates are opened wide,
"Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
"For these majestic forms"—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—"Depart!
"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
"Our work is done; we have no heart
"To mar our work,"—we cried.

# PIPPA PASSES

(A Drama)

*I dedicate my best intentions, in this poem, admiringly to the author of "Ion," affectionately to Mr. Sergeant Talfourd.* *R. B.*

*London: 1841.*

## PERSONS

| | |
|---|---|
| PIPPA | JULES |
| OTTIMA | PHENE |
| SEBALD | *Austrian Police* |
| *Foreign Students* | BLUPHOCKS |
| GOTTLIEB | LUIGI *and his Mother* |
| SCHRAMM | *Poor Girls* |

MONSIGNOR *and his Attendants*

## INTRODUCTION

*New Year's Day at Asolo in the Trevisan. A large, mean, airy chamber. A girl,* PIPPA, *from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

O Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,

The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labor or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'Tis their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be

Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
And here I let time slip for naught!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!
  But love, love, love—there's better love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first offer;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?

Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! for are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—

(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New Year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God;*
*If now, as formerly he trod*
*Paradise, his presence fills*
*Our earth, each only as God wills*
*Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,*
*Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not a "small event!" Why "small"?*
*Costs it more pain that this, ye call*
*A "great event," should come to pass,*
*Than that? Untwine me from the mass*
*Of deeds which make up life, one deed*
*Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!

A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*

## Part I—Morning

*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* Luca's *Wife,* Ottima, *and her Paramour, the German* Sebald.

*Seb.* [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink!*
*Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!*
*Deep into the night, drink!*

*Otti.* Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights, perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

*Seb.* Ay, thus it used to be!
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.

Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."
This house was his, this chair, this window—his.
*Otti.* Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's;
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!
*Seb.* Morning?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where's dew, where's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
I' the dust o' the sill.
*Otti.* Oh, shut the lattice, pray!
*Seb.* Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.
There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out
With all of it.
*Otti.* Best never speak of it.
*Seb.* Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,
"His blood."
*Otti.* Assuredly if I repented
The deed—
*Seb.* Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?
*Otti.* No; I said the deed . . .
*Seb.* "The deed" and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .
*Otti.* Here's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above.

And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

*Seb.* But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

*Otti.* There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?

*Seb.* No, the white wine—the white wine!
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

*Otti.* You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

*Seb.* 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

*Otti.* Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald?

*Seb.* Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all!

We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this: conceive you?
*Otti.* Love!
*Seb.* Not tied so sure!
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?
*Otti.* Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .
*Seb.* "A thing"—there again—"a thing!"
*Otti.* Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 'tis here
As much as there in the deserted house:
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you worse,
Luca, than . . . "
*Seb.* Off, off—take your hands off mine,
'Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?
*Otti.* There's one thing must be done; you know what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.
*Seb.* What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.
*Otti.* This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.

*Seb.* Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world,
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .
*Otti.* See!
*Seb.* No, I'll finish. Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell!
*Otti.* My poor lost friend!
*Seb.* He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—oh, how feel you? Feel you for me?
*Otti.* Well then, I love you better now than ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,

This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
May not now be looked over: look it down!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"
*Seb.* And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!
*Otti.* And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—
*Seb.* When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?
*Otti.* Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.
*Seb.* You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.
*Otti.* Then our crowning night!
*Seb.* The July night?
*Otti.* The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.
*Seb.* How it came!
*Otti.* Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;

Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—
*Seb.* Yes!
*Otti.* —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!
*Seb.* Slower, Ottima!
*Otti.* And as we lay—
*Seb.* Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak slow!
Do not lean on me!
*Otti.* Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'Tis right to die!
"Right to be punished! naught completes such bliss
"But woe!" Who said that?
*Seb.* How did we ever rise?
Was't that we slept? Why did it end?
*Otti.* I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!
*Seb.* I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?
*Otti.* Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!
*Seb.* I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

*The year's at the spring*
*And day's at the morn;*
*Morning's at seven;*
*The hill-side's dew-pearled;*
*The lark's on the wing;*
*The snail's on the thorn:*
*God's in his heaven—*
*All's right with the world!*

[PIPPA *passes.*

*Seb.* God's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who spoke?
You, you spoke!
*Otti.* Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!
She does not hear: call you out louder!
*Seb.* Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!
*Otti.* Sebald?
*Seb.* Wipe off that paint! I hate you!
*Otti.* Miserable!
*Seb.* My God, and she is emptied of it now!
Outright now!—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places: and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!
*Otti.* Speak to me—not of me!
*Seb.* —That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!
*Otti.* To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!
A coward, too: but ingrate's worse than all.

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!
Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!
*Seb.* My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath!
*Otti.* You hate me then? You hate me then?
*Seb.* To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!
*Otti.* —Me!
Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!
*Seb.* My brain is drowned now—quite drowned; all I feel
Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!
*Otti.* Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from the hillside to Orcana. Foreign* STUDENTS *of painting and sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of* JULES, *a young French statuary, at Possagno.*

*1st Student.* Attention! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

*2d Stud.* All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—*"Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies."* His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

*3rd Stud.* Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

*2d Stud.* Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

*1st Stud.* To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the newcomer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and

Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all. Now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

*Gott.* Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

*4th Stud.* Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

*Gott.* His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

*4th Stud.* That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

*Gott.* See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those above, his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Stud.* Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favorite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

*1st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-by, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

*5th Stud.* Tell him about the women; go on to the women!

*1st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla.* Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice* transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her

name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

*6th Stud.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

*5th Stud.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple, —like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

*2d Stud.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy! rich, that your face may the better set it off.

*6th Stud.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Gott.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Stud.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Stud.* She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

*Gott.* How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

*1st Stud.* They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

## Part II—Noon

*Over Orcana. The house of* Jules, *who crosses its threshold with* Phene: *she is silent, on which* Jules *begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—

My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 'tis their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!
You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak you!
O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?
Now speak!
Only first,
See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!
Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:

This minion, a Coluthus writ in red,
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
*"He said, and on Antinous directed*
*A bitter shaft"* . . . a flower blots out the rest!
Again upon your search? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognised?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
" 'Praise those who slew Hipparchus!' cry the guests,
" 'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
" 'As erst above our champion: stand up, all!' "
See, I have labored to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branches' end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erheard, not crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"

Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype—
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked:
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?
Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed; but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are:
Above the world.
You creature with the eyes!
If I could look forever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!
But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .
I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was't in the tone
Or the words, your power?
Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because I doubted it,

Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!
But still Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
"And lure him on until, at innermost
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
"And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
"Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I'll speak it,—"Do not die, love! I am yours" . . .
No—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
What costs such pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;*
*In my life, a devil rather than saint;*
*In my brain, as poor a creature too:*
*No end to all I cannot do!*
*Yet do one thing at least I can—*
*Love a man or hate a man*
*Supremely: thus my love began.*
*Through the Valley of Love I went,*
*In the lovingest spot to abide,*
*And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,*
*I found Hate dwelling beside.*

*(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,*
*Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)*
*And further, I traversed Hate's grove,*
*In the hatefullest nook to dwell;*
*But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love*
*Where the shadow threefold fell.*
*(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,*
*Not a painter's lips should tell!)*

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,
" 'You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
" 'My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
" 'What needs some explanation! What means this?' "
—And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,*
*From simple that I was of late.*
*Once, when I loved, I would enlace*
*Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face*
*Of her I loved, in one embrace—*
*As if by mere love I could love immensely!*
*Once, when I hated, I would plunge*
*My sword, and wipe with the first lunge*
*My foe's whole life out like a sponge—*
*As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!*
*But now I am wiser, know better the fashion*
*How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:*
*And if I see cause to love more, hate more*
*Than ever man loved, ever hated before—*
*And seek in the Valley of Love*
*The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove*
*Where my soul may surely reach*
*The essence, naught less, of each,*
*The Hate of all Hates, the Love*
*Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—*
*I find them the very warders*
*Each of the other's borders.*
*When I love most, Love is disguised*
*In Hate; and when Hate is surprised*

*In Love, then I hate most: ask*
*How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque.*
*Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—*
*And how, having hated thee,*
*I sought long and painfully*
*To reach thy heart, nor prick*
*The skin but pierce to the quick—*
*Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight*
*By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.
Keep
What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . . let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing—*

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!*
*When—where—*
*How—can this arm establish her above me,*
*If fortune fixed her as my lady there,*
*There already, to eternally reprove me?*
*("Hist!" said Kate the queen;*
*But "Oh!" cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*
*"'Tis only a page that carols unseen,*
*Crumbling your hounds their messes!")*

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honor,*
*My heart!*
*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?*
*Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.*
*But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!*
*("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the queen;*
*And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*
*"'Tis only a page that carols unseen,*
*Fitting your hawks their jesses!")*

[PIPPA *passes.*

JULES *resumes.*

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—
"She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
"Need him to help her!"
Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!
How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:

Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Witihout me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.
To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only; there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with* BLUPHOCKS, *an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.* So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money

shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark, over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!;* and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—*"How Moses hocuspocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,"*—or, *"How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,"* —or, *"How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam."*—In no wise!—*"Shackabrack—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Exchan-ger of—Stolen Goods!"* So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers)* . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

*1st Policeman.* There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest*] I have been noticing a

house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning:

*2d Pal.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here! He dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

*Blup.* Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

*2d Pol.* Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon's over or nearly so.

*3d Pol.* Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2d Pol.* Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" inkspirt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

## Part III—Evening

*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.* Luigi *and his Mother entering.*

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
*Luigi.* Here in the archway?
*Mother.* Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
*Luigi.* Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
Who lean out of their topmost fortress—look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.
Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"
That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate? Hark—"Meet your fate!"
*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City! putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.
*Luigi.* Hush! say A. writes, and B.
*Mother.* These A.'s and B.'s write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?
*Luigi.* They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .
*Mother.* —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?
*Luigi.* Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect

All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
"Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
"More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.
No, trouble's a bad word: for as I walk
There's springing and melody and giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me:
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!
"Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
"For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!

*Mother.* But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

*Mother.* Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means
To this wild enterprise. Say, you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

*Luigi.* Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.

I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!
*Mother.* (He will not go!)
*Luigi.* You smile at me! 'Tis true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.
*Mother.* See now: you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how?
*Luigi.* Oh, that's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all

Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favorite,
Whence he is bound and what's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!
You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his grave!
*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but naught between:
As a short-sighted man sees naught midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love:
I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!
*Luigi.* Now do you try me, or make sport of me?
How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .
*Mother.* Well?
*Luigi.* (Sure, he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo: spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . . better go at once to modern time.
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that's my boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.
*Mother.* Why go to-night?
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!
*Luigi.* "I am the bright and morning-star," saith God—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?
*Mother.* Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those who live through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.
*Mother.* In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.
*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo?
*Mother.* The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.
*Luigi.* We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

*A king lived long ago,*
*In the morning of the world,*
*When earth was nigher heaven than now;*
*And the king's locks curled,*
*Disparting o'er a forehead full*
*As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn*
*Of some sacrificial bull—*
*Only calm as a babe new-born:*
*For he was got to a sleepy mood,*
*So safe from all decrepitude,*
*Age with its bane, so sure gone by,*
(*The Gods so loved him while he dreamed*)
*That, having lived thus long, there seemed*
*No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was:*
*Before his palace, in the sun,*

*He sat to see his people pass,*
*And judge them every one*
*From its threshold of smooth stone.*
*They haled him many a valley-thief*
*Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief,*
*Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,*
*Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found*
*On the sea-sand left aground;*
*And sometimes clung about his feet,*
*With bleeding lip and burning cheek,*
*A woman, bitterest wrong to speak*
*Of one with sullen thickset brows:*
*And sometimes from the prison-house*
*The angry priests a pale wretch brought,*
*Who through some chink had pushed and pressed*
*On knees and elbows, belly and breast,*
*Worm-like into the temple,—caught*
*He was by the very God,*
*Who ever in the darkness strode*
*Backward and forward, keeping watch*
*O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!*
*These, all and every one,*
*The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sitting in the sun!

*His councillors, on left and right,*
*Looked anxious up,—but no surprise*
*Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes*
*Where the very blue had turned to white.*
*'Tis said, a Python scared one day*
*The breathless city, till he came,*
*With forky tongue and eyes on flame,*
*Where the old king sat to judge alway;*
*But when he saw the sweepy hair*
*Girt with a crown of berries rare*
*Which the God will hardly give to wear*
*To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare*
*In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,*
*At his wondrous forest rites,—*
*Seeing this, he did not dare*

*Approach that threshold in the sun,*
*Assault the old king smiling there.*
*Such grace had kings when the world begun!*
[PIPPA *passes.*

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now that the world ends;
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'Tis God's voice calls; how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor* GIRLS *sitting on the steps.*

*1st Girl.* There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you, wish first!
*2d Girl.* I? This sunset
To finish.
*3d Girl.* That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
"Eh, baggage, had I not!"—
*2d Girl.* How she can lie!
*3d Girl.* Look there—by the nails—
*2d Girl.* What makes your fingers red?
*3d Girl.* Dipping them into wine to write bad words with
On the bright table: how he laughed!
*1st Girl.* My turn.
Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,

With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!
*3d Girl.* Say at once
You'd be at home: she'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dung-hill of your garden!
*1st Girl.* They destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
*Cric—cric*—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.
*3d Girl.* How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he'll not be gulled!")
"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
"Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!
*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.
*2d Girl.* When you were young? Nor are you young, that's true.

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your color—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!
*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough.
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.
*2d Girl.* Why, there! is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick!—
Where the lights are?
*1st Girl.* That she? No, or she would sing,
For the Intendant said . . .
*3d Girl.* Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!
*2d Girl* [*sings*]

*You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry*
*Your love's protracted growing:*
*June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,*
*From seeds of April's sowing.*

*I plant a heartful now: some seed*
*At least is sure to strike,*
*And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,*
*Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,*
*A grave's one violet:*
*Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.*
*What's death? You'll love me yet!*

*3d Girl.* [*To* PIPPA, *who approaches*] Oh, you may

come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

## Part IV—Night

*Inside the Palace by the Duomo,* Monsignor, *dismissing his Attendants.*

*Mon.* Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go. [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

*Inten.* Uguccio—

*Mon.* . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Inten.* Do you choose this especial night to question me?

*Mon.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the third of December, I find him . . .

*Inten.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

*Mon.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to your-

self on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—"He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

*Inten.* Is Correggio a painter?

*Mon.* Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

*Inten.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

*Mon.* Ugo!

*Inten.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questoned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

*Mon.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

*Inten.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

*Mon.* I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

*Inten.* No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

*Mon.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere,* for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sack-cloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

*Inten.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Mon.* Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

*Inten.* "Forgive us our trespasses"?

*Mon.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Inten.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Mon.* 1, 2—No. 3! ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

*Inten.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

*Mon.* Liar!

*Inten.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

*Mon.* I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Inten.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and forever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

*Over-head the tree-tops meet,*
*Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;*
*There was naught above me, naught below,*
*My childhood had not learned to know:*
*For, what are the voices of birds*

*—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,*
*Only so much more sweet?*
*The knowledge of that with my life begun.*
*But I had so near made out the sun,*
*And counted your stars, the seven and one,*
*Like the fingers of my hand:*
*Nay, I could all but understand*
*Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;*
*And just when out of her soft fifty changes*
*No unfamiliar face might overlook me—*
*Suddenly God took me.*

[PIPPA *passes.*

*Mon.* [*Springing up*] My people—one and all—all—within thee! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick, I say!

PIPPA'S *Chamber again. She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
While winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
"Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze"—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
"More like" . . . (what said she?)—"and less like canoes!"
How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,

Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-colored hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New Year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.
Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked you!
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,

Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now!
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
"I have made her gorge polenta
"Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
"As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!
"See this heightened color too,
"For she swilled Breganze wine
"Till her nose turned deep carmine;
" 'Twas but white when wild she grew.
"And only by this Zanze's eyes
"Of which we could not change the size,
"The magnitude of what's achieved
"Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!
[*After she has begun to undress herself.*
Now, one thing I should like to really know:

How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind. [*Sitting on the bedside.*
And border Ottima's cloak hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half-promised when I rose!
True in some sense or other, I suppose.
[*As she lies down.*
God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

*All service ranks the same with God—*
*With God, whose puppets, best and worst,*
*Are we; there is no last nor first.* [*She sleeps.*

# DRAMATIC LYRICS

## CAVALIER TUNES

### I MARCHING ALONG

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folks droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—

Chorus—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry, as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

Chorus—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?*

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

Chorus—*March we along, fifty-score strong,*
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

### II GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

Chorus—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?*
*Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now.*
*King Charles!*

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

Chorus—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?*
*Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,*
*King Charles!*

### III BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

Chorus—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

Chorus—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
Chorus—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
"I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
Chorus—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

## THE LOST LEADER

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more foot-path untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,

Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

## "HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gatebolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;

And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix galloped Roland and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent.

## SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

G-r-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
  Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
  God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
  Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
  Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
  *Salve tibi!* I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
  Sort of season, time of year:
*Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely*
  *Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:*
*What's the Latin name for "parsley"?*
  What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
  Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
  And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
  Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L for our initial!
  (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

*Saint,* forsooth! While brown Dolores
  Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
  Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
  —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
  (That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

Oh, those melons! If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,

Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia,*
*Ave, Virgo!* Gr-r-r—you swine!

## THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN]

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame

"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine;

"For he is young and led astray,
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
"To change the laws of church and state;
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
"Who, ere the thunder breaks shall roll
"Its clouds away and save his soul.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayest demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

I told the father all his schemes
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
"The one spot from his soul away;
"To-night he comes, but not the same
"Will look!" At night he never came.

Nor next night; on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market-place;
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

## MEETING AT NIGHT

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

## PARTING AT MORNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

## SONG

Nay but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

## EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour,
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,

Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was naught to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
My heart seemed full as it could hold;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep;
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret; go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in 'gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.
Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

## UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!
Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights;
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted fore-finger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin;
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the traveling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot,
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming) "the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
"Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart!
*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still; it's the greatest pleasure in life.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals;
*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

Oh Galuppi, Baldassarro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm
in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-
day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do
you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so
red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its
bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might
base his head?

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off
and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his
sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished,
sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—
"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we can
but try!"
"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"
—"Yes. And you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop them, when a million
seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered
to!

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,
I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and
gay!
"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master
play!"

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep through every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned;
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

"Yours for instance; you know physics; something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

## OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

The morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say:
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain side.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some sights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf which they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;

—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life of the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

And here where your praise might yield returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labor,
With the upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbor!
'Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy.

"If you knew their work you would deal your dole."
May I take it upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached its goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
The Truth of Man, by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.

—When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's clear plan.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change;
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavor,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallised forever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
"And paint man man, whatever the issue!
"Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
"New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters:
"To bring the invisible full into play!
"Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why honor them now! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folk leave college.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labor are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God;
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed.
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo.
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance;
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick lime.)

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be outferreted?
Why is it they never remember me?

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor the wronged Lippino and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honor.

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last! and to whom?—to whom?

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;

None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witenagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi,"*quod videas ante)*
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go, each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero-rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimaera's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an *"issimo,"*)
To end now our half-told talë of Cambuscan,
And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo:*
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
While "God and the People" plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
And Florence together,—the first am I!

## "DE GUSTIBUS——"

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the bean-flowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her Calais)—
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west died
away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish, 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;

In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar grand and grey;
"Here and here did England help me: how can I help England"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## SAUL

### I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for they countenance sent,
"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
"Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
"Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
"And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

### II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
"On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
"Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as caught in his pangs
And awaiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonised Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune for which quails on the corn-land will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand-house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear him along
"With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
"To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
"Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
"Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
"The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
"Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
"And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
"And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
"And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
"And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
"That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

"How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
"All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!
"Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
"When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
"Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
"The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
"Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,
" 'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best'?
"Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
"And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
"Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:
"And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
"Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
"Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
"And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
"On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
"That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)
"High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
"Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And awaited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breast-plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse, 'twixt hope and despair;

Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine,
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For awhile there was trouble with me,) what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago in the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;

And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people, at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
"Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains
"And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now those old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
"From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
"In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
"Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
"Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
"The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in turn,
"Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect; yet more was to learn,
"E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
"When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight

"Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
"Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall stanch
"Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
"Leave the flesh to the fate it was meant for! the spirit be thine!
"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
"More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
"Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou hast done
"Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
"Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
"Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
"Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too give forth
"A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the North
"With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
"But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
"As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
"So with man—so his power and his beauty forever take flight.
"No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
"Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!

"Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
"A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the skies,
"Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
"Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
"In great characters cut by the scribe.—Such was Saul, so he did;
"With the sages directing the work, but the populace chid,—
"For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
"In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
"(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
"With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
"Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
"With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:
"So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
"In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile
Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
"I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
"I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
"As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
"I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
"And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
"His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
"I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.
"Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
"To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
"Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!
"Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
"I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
"In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
"In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
"And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
"The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
"Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
"I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.

"There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
"E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
"But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
"God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
"—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
"That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
"Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
"And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
"Would it ever have entered my mind,—the bare will, much less power,—
"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
"Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
"—And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),
"These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
"This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring death's minute of night?

"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
"Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now—and bid him awake
"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
"Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
"To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
"The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure:
"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss;
"And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
"All's one gift: thou canst grant it, moreover, as prompt to my prayer
"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
"From thy will stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
"*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
"To look that, even that, in the face too? Why is it I dare
"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
"This:—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
"See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,—
"To fill up his life, starve my own out,—I would; knowing which,

"I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave, up nor down,
"One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
"As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
"He who did most, shall bear most: the strongest shall stand the most weak.
" 'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
"A face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
"Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts, about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"

## MY STAR

All that I know
  Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
  (Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
  Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
  They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled·
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

## BY THE FIRE-SIDE

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come:
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek:
"Now then, or never, out we slip
"To cut from the hazels by the creek
"A mainmast for our ship!"

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,
  Knowing so well the leader's hand:
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
  Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

Look at the ruined chapel again
  Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
  Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
  The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
  The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

Does it feed the little lake below?
  That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
  How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
  And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
  The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
  And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
  For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
  Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
  And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-colored flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond,
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams.—

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,
  And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
  It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
  Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
  With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them:
  Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
  Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem!

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
  No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
  And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

When, if I think but deep enough,
  You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
  Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
  This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
  To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

My own, see where the years conduct!
  At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
  In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
  And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
  And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
  Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
  The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
  Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

Oh moment, one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
  How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

We two stood there with never a third,
  But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
  The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
  And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
  Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
  So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face wth a guard between,
  And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
  Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
  But bring to the last leaf no such test!
"Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
  To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
  When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
  Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all!
  Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
  That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
  And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

You might have turned and tried a man,
  Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
  His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
  And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
  They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen
  Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
  Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I wonder do you feel to-day
  As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
  In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touch a thought, I know,
  Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
  Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it! First it left
  The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
  Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed
  Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
  Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece
  Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
  An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
  Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
  Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
  Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
  How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

That was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof;
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

So wore night; the East was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes.

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the taskmaster's curse
"Than such music on the roads!

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
"Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
"Any star, the smallest one,
"While some drops, where lightning rent,
"Show the final storm begun—

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
"When the garden-voices fail
"In the darkness thick and hot,—
"Shall another voice avail,
"That shape be where these are not?

"Has some plague a longer lease,
"Proffering its help uncouth?
"Can't one even die in peace?
"As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
"Is that face the last one sees?"

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

## ONE WAY OF LOVE

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

## RESPECTABILITY

Dear, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
"Have recognised your plighted troth,
"Am sponsor for you: live in peace!"—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevard break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? Down the court three lampions flare;
Put forward your best foot!

## LOVE IN A LIFE

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.

Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.
Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

## LIFE IN A LOVE

Escape me?
Never—
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
  So long as the world contains us both,
  Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear;
  It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
  Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
  To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again,—
  So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
  At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
  Than a new one, straight to self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

## IN THREE DAYS

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short,
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Out breaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold.

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
"That change the world might change as well
"Your fortune; and if joy delays,
"Be happy that no worse befell!"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
"May throw no shadow on your ways;
"But years must teem with change untried,
"With chance not easily defied,
"With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear!—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.

Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

## IN A YEAR

Never any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the color sprung,
Then he heard.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
"Now unblamed,
"Since upon thy soul as well
"Hangeth mine!"

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth:
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
"Mine before.

"What, she felt the while,
"Must I think?
"Love's so different with us men!"
He should smile:

"Dying for my sake—
"White and pink!
"Can't we touch these bubbles then
"But they break?"

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

### A PICTURE AT FANO

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

## MEMORABILIA

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!
But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breath of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

## POPULARITY

Stand still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
  Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but thou
  "Forever set'st our table praising,
"Keep'st the good wine till now!"

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
  With few or none to watch and wonder
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
  By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
  Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
  And colored like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all
  Could criticise, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
  —To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
  The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
  As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon
  Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
  In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold
  Which burns deep in the bluebell's womb
What time, with ardors manifold,
  The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

# A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

1843

*PERSONS*

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.
HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, *and other retainers of* Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—

## ACT I

SCENE I—*The interior of a lodge in* LORD TRESHAM'S *park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.* GERARD, *the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

*1st Retainer.* Ay, do! push, friends and then you'll push down me!
—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

*Gerard.* Save your courtesies, my friend. Here is my place.

*2nd Retainer.* Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days

I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?
*Gerard.* What then?
*2nd Retainer.* What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favorite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—
"What then?" say you!
*3rd Retainer.* I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!
*Gerard.* Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?
*4th Retainer.* Let Gerard be!
He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?
*1st Retainer.* Our retainers look as fine—
That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?
*4th Retainer.* He's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.
*1st Retainer.* That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!
*3rd Retainer.* I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable

On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—
*Gerard.* —With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!
*3rd Retainer.* Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!
*1st Retainer.* Oh, Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!
*6th Retainer.* Ay—ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!
*1st Retainer.* No? That's comfort.
*2nd Retainer.* Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.
*3rd Retainer.* His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!
*4th Retainer.* So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!
*5th Retainer.* Here's Lord Tresham's self!
There now—there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head.
*2nd Retainer.* But you'd not have a boy
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
That stateliness?
*1st Retainer.* Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
—At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the window bench, and making for the table and its jugs*]
Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!
*6th Retainer.* My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!
*2nd Retainer.* God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!
*Gerard.* Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!
*2nd Retainer* [*aside*]. He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!
[*To* GERARD] Remember that the Earl returns this way.
*Gerard.* That way?
*2nd Retainer.* Just so.
*Gerard.* Then my way's here. [*Goes*
*2nd Retainer.* Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honor, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule—
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humor: die he will!
*2nd Retainer.* God help him! Who's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.
*3rd Retainer.* I!—
*4th Retainer.* I!—
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!

Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here's the last drop!
*1st Retainer.* Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II—*A Saloon in the Mansion*

*Enter* LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN.

*Tresham.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
—Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
Would win you welcome!—
*Mertoun.* Thanks!
*Tresham.* —But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
One favor more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome I should give;—'tis given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.
*Mertoun.* I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?
*Guendolen* [*apart to* AUSTIN]. Why, this is loving, Austin!
*Austin.* He's so young!
*Guendolen.* Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.
*Austin.* Hush!
He reddens.
*Guendolen.* Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.
*Tresham.* We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.
*Mertoun.* But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?
*Tresham.* My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?
*Mertoun.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight

And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.
*Guendolen* [*aside to* AUSTIN]. Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,
"Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!
*Tresham.* What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
We brothers talk!
*Mertoun.* I thank you.
*Tresham.* In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?
*Mertoun.* No more—thanks, thanks—no more!
*Tresham.* This matter then discussed . . .
*Mertoun.* —We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favor me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

*Tresham.* With less regret 'tis suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.
*Mertoun.* We? again?—
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.
*Tresham.* So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.
*Mertoun.* You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
*Tresham.* So may it prove!
*Mertoun.* You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!
*Guendolen and Austin.* Thanks!
*Tresham.* Within there!
[Servants *enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks,*
Well,
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say yes—
"She'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
"And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"
*Guendolen.* That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervor's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.

*Austin.* Here's Thorold. Tell him so!
*Tresham* [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!
How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come—the Earl?
*Guendolen.* He's young.
*Tresham.* What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?
*Guendolen.* There's tact for you!
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .
*Tresham.* Well?
*Guendolen.* —With lacking wit.
*Tresham.* He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?
*Guendolen.* In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
"Your cousin there will do me detriment
"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
"In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave
"My Mildred, when his best account of me
"Is ended, in full confidence I wear
"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .
*Tresham.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
"Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
You golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us; she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!
*Guendolen.* Austin, how we must—!
*Tresham.* Must what? Must speak truth,

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!
*Guendolen.* Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.
*Tresham.* What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at furthest.
*Guendolen.* Ne'er instruct me!
*Tresham.* Come!
—He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III—MILDRED'S *chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED *and* GUENDOLEN.

*Guendolen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of blue—
I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.
*Mildred.* Guendolen!
What have I done? what could suggest . . .
*Guendolen.* There, there!
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,

Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-time misplaced attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labor. Ask and have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!
*Mildred.* My brother—
Did he . . . you said that he received him well?
*Guendolen.* If I said only "well" I said not much.
Oh, stay—which brother?
*Mildred.* Thorold! who—who else?
*Guendolen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honor, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?
*Mildred.* You wrong him, Guendolen.
*Guendolen.* He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .
*Mildred.* Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.
*Guendolen.* Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself

Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .
*Mildred.* Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?
*Guendolen.* Not your brother; therefore,
Not the whole world.
*Mildred.* I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me!
*Guendolen.* I am foolish,
*Mildred.* Oh no, kind!
But I would rest.
*Guendolen.* Good night and rest to you!
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?
*Mildred.* Brown hair.
*Guendolen.* Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could you know that?
*Mildred.* How? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
Good night!
*Guendolen.* Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!
[*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred!
Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance! [*Goes.*
*Mildred.* Is she—can she be really gone at last?
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.*

There!

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!

Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.

[*A noise without.*

The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*

*There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;*
*And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest:*
*And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre*
*Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,*
*Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:*
*Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble!*

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.*

*And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,*
*"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,*
*"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!) adore her,*
*Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—*

[*He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

*I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,*
*And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me!*

[*The* Earl *throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!
*Mildred.* Sit, Henry—do not take my hand!
*Mertoun.* 'Tis mine.
The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.
*Mildred.* What begins now?
*Mertoun.* Happiness
Such as the world contains not.
*Mildred.* That is it.
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!
*Mertoun.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face?
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapor steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?
*Mildred.* Sin has surprised us, so will punishment,
*Mertoun.* No—me alone, who sinned alone!
*Mildred.* The night
You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?
*Mertoun.* Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm

And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.
*Mildred.* Come what come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!
*Mertoun* [*after a pause*]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?
*Mildred.* They told me all.
I know all.
*Mertoun.* It will soon be over.
*Mildred.* Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'tis over"? Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . .
lip—
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!
*Mertoun.* Mildred, my honor is your own. I'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.
*Mildred.* I'll meet their faces, Henry!

*Mertoun.* When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!
*Mildred.* Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must
Despise me!
*Mertoun.* Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?
*Mildred.* Dear Henry!
*Mertoun.* I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,

If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—
Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!

*Mildred.* Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We'll love on; you will love me still.

*Mertoun.* Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me.

*Mildred.* Go!
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

*Mertoun.* This is not our last meeting?

*Mildred.* One night more.

*Mertoun.* And then—think, then!

*Mildred.* Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

*Mertoun.* How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mildred.* So may it be! but——
You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

*Mertoun.* Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed
To-morrow night?
*Mildred.* Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love!
He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

## ACT II

SCENE—*The Library.*

*Enter* LORD TRESHAM, *hastily.*

*Tresham.* This way! In, Gerard, quick!
[*As* GERARD *enters,* TRESHAM *secures the door.*
Now speak! or, wait—
I'll bid you speak directly.
[*Seats himself.*
Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me; either
I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived here?
Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you?
*Gerard.* —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.
*Tresham.* Yes, yes. You ever were of all
The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.
*Gerard.* I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .
*Tresham.* Since when?

*Gerard.* At least
A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.
*Tresham.* Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!
*Gerard.* He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .
*Tresham.* The last great yew-tree?
*Gerard.* You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .
*Tresham.* Quick!
*Gerard.* Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—
*Tresham.* —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?
Gerard?
*Gerard.* There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .
*Tresham.* Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?
*Gerard.* Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .
*Tresham.* —And stay?
*Gerard.* An hour, two hours.
*Tresham.* And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!
*Gerard.* Twenty times.
*Tresham.* And what brings you

Under the yew-trees?
*Gerard.* The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.
*Tresham.* Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?
*Gerard.* But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
*From* Lady Mildred's chamber.
*Tresham* [*after a pause*]. You have no cause
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?
*Gerard.* Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die:
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.
*Tresham.* No—
No, Gerard!
*Gerard.* Let me go!
*Tresham.* A man, you say:
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?

*Gerard.* A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!
*Tresham.* Why?
*Gerard.* He is ever armed: his sword projects
Beneath the cloak.
*Tresham.* Gerard,—I will not say
No word, no breath of this!
*Gerard.* Thanks, thanks, my lord!
[*Goes.*
*Tresham* [*paces the room. After a pause*]. Oh, thoughts
absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seem to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and here
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—
Has told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,* GUENDOLEN'S *voice is heard at the door.*

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks*] Is Lord Tresham there?

[TRESHAM, *hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.*

*Tresham.* Come in! [*She enters.*
Ha, Guendolen!—good morning.
*Guendolen.* Nothing more?
*Tresham.* What should I say more?
*Guendolen.* Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!
*Tresham.* Who, I?
You laugh at me.
*Guendolen.* Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?
*Tresham.* When left you Mildred's chamber?
*Guendolen.* Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .
*Tresham.* Send her here!
*Guendolen.* Thorold?
*Tresham.* I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!
*Guendolen.* Mildly?
*Tresham.* Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!
*Guendolen.* I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!
*Tresham.* Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—

In the adjoining gallery! There, go! [GUENDOLEN *goes.*
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm
"The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!" There,
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend naught, naught's to say.
Or do, or think. Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

*Enter* MILDRED.

*Mildred.* What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That's Latin surely.
*Tresham.* Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem—best love?
*Mildred.* True love.
*Tresham.* I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
Of all that love or that profess to love?
*Mildred.* The list's so long: there's father's, mother's, husband's . . .
*Tresham.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,

Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
—Much head these make against the newcomer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away! Come whither—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be placed for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.
*Mildred.* What is this for?
*Tresham.* This, Mildred, is it for!
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
So close you live and yet so far apart!
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
The sweet and palpitating mystery

That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak?
*Mildred.* Speak!
*Tresham.* I will.
Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
[*After a pause*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it up then! Move
Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
[*After a pause*] Is there a gallant that has night by night
Admittance to your chamber?
[*After a pause*] Then, his name!
Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now,—his name!
*Mildred.* Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'Tis naught to say that I'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.
*Tresham.* Then judge yourself! How should I act? Pronounce!
*Mildred.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
'Twere easily arranged for me: but you—
What would become of you?
*Tresham.* And what will now
Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine

From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb,
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
The youth without suspicion face can come
From Heaven and heart from . . . whence proceed such hearts?
I have dispatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if 'twere written down—
"His suit finds favor in your eyes." Now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that!
*Mildred.* But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said?
*Tresham.* The Earl?
*Mildred.* I will receive him.
*Tresham* [*starting up*]. Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN *and* AUSTIN *enter.*

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!
*Austin and Guendolen.* How? Mildred?
*Tresham.* Mildred once!
Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!

Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!
*Guendolen.* Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!
*Tresham.* You have heard . . .
*Guendolen.* Too much! You must proceed no further.
*Mildred.* Yes—
Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!
*Tresham.* All is truth,
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,
She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,
—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honor's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
"Talk not to me of torture—I'll betray
"No comrade I've pledged faith to!"—you have heard
Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
"In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
"Repute or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You've felt they were God's men and women still,
So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[*As* MILDRED *faints and falls,* TRESHAM *rushes out.*

*Austin.* Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

*Guendolen.* We?
What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where's my place
But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!

*Austin.* No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
She is unworthy to behold . . .

*Guendolen.* Us two?
If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah, that's to only signify
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself:
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,

"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction—lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's
Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

*Austin.* Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

*Mildred.* I—I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

*Guendolen.* Mildred!

*Mildred.* Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
Now punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.

*Guendolen.* What is this?
Where start you to?

*Mildred.* Oh, Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose

My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?
*Guendolen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!
*Mildred.* I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.
*Guendolen.* Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN *goes.*
*Mildred.* No—I cannot weep.
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!
*Guendolen.* Yes: and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.
*Mildred.* Confide!
*Guendolen.* Your lover's name, then! I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!
*Mildred.* My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.
*Guendolen.* At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
*Mildred.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen
So low!
*Guendolen.* You love him still, then?
*Mildred.* My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young—

"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.
*Guendolen.* How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
*Mildred.* There is a cloud around me.
*Guendolen.* But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
*Mildred.* I say there is a cloud . . .
*Guendolen.* No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
*Mildred.* What maddest fancy . . .
*Guendolen* [*calling aloud*]. Austin! (spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
*Mildred.* By all your love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .
*Guendolen.* Just for this!
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!
*Mildred.* If you would see me die before his face . . .
*Guendolen.* I'd hold my peace! and if the Earl returns
To-night?
*Mildred.* Ah Heaven, he's lost!
*Guendolen.* I thought so. Austin!

*Enter* AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?
*Austin.* Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.
*Guendolen.* Gone? All thwarts us.
*Mildred.* Thorold too?
*Guendolen.* I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

## ACT III

SCENE I—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

*Enter* TRESHAM *through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here. What must I do?
[*A bell strikes*] A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.
[*He retires behind one of the trees.*
*After a pause, enter* MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*
*Mertoun.* Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.
[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*
And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.
[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,*
TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*
Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace,
*Tresham.* Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
Out of the shadow!
*Mertoun.* I am armed, fool!
*Tresham.* Yes,
Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—
*Mertoun.* That voice!
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.
I'll come with you. [*They advance.*
*Tresham.* You're armed: that's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?
*Mertoun.* (Tresham!—she is lost!)

*Tresham.* Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!

*Mertoun.* I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham!

[*He throws off his disguises.*

*Tresham.* Mertoun!
[*After a pause*] Draw now!

*Mertoun.* Hear me
But speak first!

*Tresham.* Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 'twas you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!

*Mertoun.* Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

*Tresham.* Ha, ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?
*Mertoun.* 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!
[*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*
*Tresham.* You are not hurt?
*Mertoun.* You'll hear me now!
*Tresham.* But rise!
*Mertoun.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?
*Tresham.* Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?
*Mertoun.* My lord—
*Tresham.* How young he is!
*Mertoun.* Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently,—
*Tresham.* Can you stay here till I return with help?
*Mertoun.* Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—
Upon my honor, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life—you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my way
The better—only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!
Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!

For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?
*Tresham.* I do.
Forgive you.
*Mertoun.* Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!
*Tresham.* Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
Thoughtless unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!
*Mertoun.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love
Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?
[*As he endeavors to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.*
Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live—must live,
There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned and die:

Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
And God will judge you.
*Tresham.* Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.
*Mertoun.* And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—
You, not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her"—you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honorable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts us out.

[*A whistle is heard.*

*Tresham.* Ho, Gerard!

*Enter* GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights.*

No one speak! You see what's done.
I cannot bear another voice.
*Mertoun.* There's light
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?
*Tresham.* I will bear those words to her.
*Mertoun.* Now?
*Tresham.* Now. Lift you the body and leave me
The head.

[*As they have half raised* MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly.*

*Mertoun.* I knew they turned me: turn me not from
her!
There! stay you! there! [*Dies.*
*Guendolen* [*after a pause*]. Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.
*Tresham.* Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.
*Guendolen.* She will die.
*Tresham.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!
*Austin.* Had we but arrived
Before you fought!
*Tresham.* There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.
*Austin.* Whither bear him?
*Tresham.* Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there
next,
We shall be friends.
[*They bear out the body of* MERTOUN.
Will she die, Guendolen?
*Guendolen.* Where are you taking me?
*Tresham.* He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have naught to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf

Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—
*Guendolen.* What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!
*Tresham.* Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—farewell!

SCENE II—MILDRED'S *chamber.*

MILDRED *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold! he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost

Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me; only Henry's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!
*Tresham* [*without*]. Mildred!
*Mildred.* Come in! Heaven hears me!
[*Enter* TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!
*Tresham.* Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!
*Mildred.* Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!
*Tresham.* My thought?
*Mildred.* All of it!
*Tresham.* How we waded years—ago—
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred,—
*Mildred.* You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?
*Tresham.* It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?
*Mildred.* Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

*Tresham.* Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, Sweet?
*Mildred* [*starting up*]. Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?
[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*
Ah, this speaks for you!
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!
*Tresham.* He bade me tell you . . .
*Mildred.* What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.
*Tresham.* You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
*Mildred.* Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .
*Tresham.* Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:
But she was sure of it.
*Mildred.* Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
*Tresham.* Him you loved:
And me?
*Mildred.* Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honor bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!

*Tresham.* No! No!
Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable.
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
You curse me?

*Mildred.* As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!
[*Falls on his neck.*
There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry! [*Dies.*

*Tresham.* I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

*Guendolen* [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham!
[*Entering with* AUSTIN] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That's well.
*Tresham.* Oh, better far than that!
*Guendolen.* She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!
*Tresham.* She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!
*Austin.* Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?
*Guendolen.* White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!
*Austin.* A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!
*Tresham.* Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,
'Twill pass away soon!—ah—I had forgotten:
I am dying.
*Guendolen.* Thorold—Thorold—why was this?
*Tresham.* I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through—
Just through!
*Guendolen.* Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.
*Tresham.* Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
I see you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand,
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!
You're lord and lady now—you're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye

All's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!
*Austin.* No blot shall come!
*Tresham.* I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! [*Dies.*
*Guendolen* [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold,
we can but—remember you!

# DRAMATIC ROMANCES

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes
"Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal's in the market-place,
"And you'll be there anon

"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
  "Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
  Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
  Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
  When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
  Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,
  Smiling the boy fell dead.

## THE PATRIOT

### AN OLD STORY

It was roses, roses, all the way,
  With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
  The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
  The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—
  "But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
  To give it my loving friends to keep!
Naught man could do, have I left undone:
  And you see my harvest,—what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
  Just a palsied few at the windows set;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
  At the Shambles' Gate,—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead:
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
"Me?" God might question.—Now, instead,
'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design: for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much;" or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint
"Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,—
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift.—Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech (which I have not) to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop.—Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together.

There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then.—I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object.—Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir.—Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,

And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love;
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew. When these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground.
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped

A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast.
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
Rested the hopes of Italy.
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
"They fix the price, because I hate
"The Austrians over us: the State
"Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
"If you betray me to their clutch,
"And be your death, for aught I know,
"If once they find you saved their foe.
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,
"And also paper, pen and ink,
"And carry safe what I shall write
"To Padua, which you'll reach at night
"Before the duomo shuts; go in,
"And wait till Tenebræ begin;
"Walk to the third confessional,
"Between the pillar and the wall,
"And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
"Say it a second time, then cease;
"And if the voice inside returns,
*"From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*

*"The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
"My letter where you placed your lip;
"Then come back happy we have done
"Our mother service—I, the son,
"As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming. We conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
"Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown
"To Italy, our mother; she
"Uses my hand and blesses thee."
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I had a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be.

I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise; while some opine
"Freedom grows licence," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantasticially in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now.

## IN A GONDOLA

*He sings.*

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
"Are mine as much as this gold chain
"She bids me wear; which" (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing
"A precious thing, or choose to fling
"Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
What's left but—all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake

Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage,
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

*He sings.*

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

*She sings.*

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings.*

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision forever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold

Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!
Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

*Still he muses.*

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet through my back: I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursèd graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do,—thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison, doubtless; but from water—feel!—

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks.*

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front 's demurely

Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All 's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach,
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave

Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look; your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

*She speaks.*

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back

That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

Your gondala—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!"—Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

*He is surprised and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die!

## WARING

What's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
"Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
"Certain first steps were achieved
"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.

I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company.
His eyes that just a little wink,
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised color, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavor
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,

So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, "to only have conceived,
"Planned your great works, apart from progress,
"Surpasses little works achieved!"
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humors licence, barely
Requiring that it lives.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East, away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne perhaps,

Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach,
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
In the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favor yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
"Give me my so-long promised son,
"Let Waring end what I begun!"
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime

Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
O Waring, what's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a-muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow,

As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

## II

"When I last saw Waring . . . "
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

"We were sailing by Triest
"Where a day or two we harbored:
"A sunset was in the West,
"When, looking over the vessel's side,
"One of our company espied
"A sudden speck to larboard.
"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
"At once, so came the light craft up,
"With its sole lateen sail that trims
"And turns (the water round its rims
"Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
"And by us like a fish it curled,
"And drew itself up close beside,
"Its great sail on the instant furled,
"And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
"(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
" 'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
" 'Or fruit, tobaccco and cigars?
" 'A pilot for you to Triest?
" 'Without one, look you ne'er so big,
" 'They'll never let you up the bay!
" 'We natives should know best.'
"I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
"Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
" 'Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
"And one, half-hidden by his side
"Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
"With great grass hat and kerchief black,
"Who looked up with his kingly throat,
"Said somewhat, while the other shook
"His hair back from his eyes to look
"Their longest at us; then the boat,
"I know not how, turned sharply round,
"Laying her whole side on the sea
"As a leaping fish does; from the lee
"Into the weather, cut somehow
"Her sparkling path beneath our bow
"And so went off, as with a bound,
"Into the rosy and golden half
"O' the sky, to overtake the sun
"And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
"Its singing cave; yet I caught one
"Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
"And neither time nor toil could mar
"Those features; so I saw the last
"Of Waring!"—You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance; right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell;
What we felt only, you expressed;
You hold things beautiful the best,
And place them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,

Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

### A Child's Story

*Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger*

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;

But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;
"And as for our Corporation—shocking
"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
"For dolts that can't or won't determine
"What's best to rid us of our vermin!
"You hope, because you're old and obese,
"To find in the furry civic robe ease?
"Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
"To find the remedy we're lacking,
"Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
"I wish I were a mile hence!
"It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
"I'm sure my poor head aches again,
"I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
"Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap

At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honors," said he, "I'm able,
"By means of a secret charm, to draw
"All creatures living beneath the sun,
"That creep or swim or fly or run,
"After me so as you never saw!
"And I chiefly use my charm
"On creatures that do people harm,
"The mole and toad and newt and viper;
"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe.

To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
"In Tartary I freed the Cham,
"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
"I eased in Asia the Nizam
"Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:
"And as for what your brain bewilders,
"If I can rid your town of rats
"Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation,
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,

Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
"I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
"And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
"Into a cider-press's gripe:
"And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
"And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
"And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
"And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
"And it seemed as if a voice
"(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
"Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
" 'The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
" 'So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
" 'Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!'
"And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
"All ready staved, like a great sun shone
"Glorious scarce an inch before me,
"Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'
"—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
"Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
"Consult with carpenters and builders,
"And leave in our town not even a trace
"Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue:
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;

And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
"Our business was done at the river's brink;
"We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
"And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
"So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
"From the duty of giving you something for drink,
"And a matter of money to put in your poke;
"But as for the guilders, what we spoke
"Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
"Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
"A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
"I've promised to visit by dinnertime
"Bagdat, and accept the prime
"Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
"For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
"Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
"With him I proved no bargain-driver.
"With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
"And folks who put me in a passion
"May find me pipe after another fashion."

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
"Being worse treated than a Cook?
"Insulted by a lazy ribald
"With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
"You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
"Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

Once more he stept into the street
  And to his lips again
  Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
  Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes, and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
"He's forced to let the piping drop,
"And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,—

"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
"I can't forget that I'm bereft
"Of all the pleasant sights they see,
"Which the Piper also promised me.
"For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
"Joining the town and just at hand,
"Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
"And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
"And everything was strange and new;
"The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
"And honey-bees had lost their stings,
"And horses were born with eagle's wings:
"And just as I became assured
"My lame foot would be speedily cured,
"The music stopped and I stood still,
"And found myself outside the hill,
"Left alone against my will,
"To go now limping as before,
"And never hear of that country more!"

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
  There came into many a burgher's pate
  A text which says that heaven's gate
  Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
  Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
  And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
  Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
  "On the Twenty-second of July,

"Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbors lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
Each in its tether

Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow:
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop:
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's:
He's for the morning!
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
"My dance is finished?"
No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city!)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:
"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
"Show me their shaping,
"Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
"Give!"—So, he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him.
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:
"Time to taste life," another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"
This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?
"Patience a moment!
"Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
"Still there's the comment.
"Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
"Painful or easy!
"Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
"Ay, nor feel queasy."
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give!
Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus!)
That before living he'd learn how to live—
No end to learning:
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
"Live now or never!"
He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
"Man has Forever."

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
*Calculus* racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
*Tussis* attacked him.
"Now master, take a little rest!"—not he!
(Caution redoubled,
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain?
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes:
"Hence with life's pale lure!"
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De,*
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:
This man decided not to live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

## HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

["Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought—nay (for He

saith, 'Compel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory."—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary,* 1600.]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:—

Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savory, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time!

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob!
What's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next?

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

Give your first groan—compunction's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!
Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

Whom now is the bishop leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds:
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed:
And it overflows when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange;
"Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
"But what, or where? at the last or first?
"In one point only we sin, at worst.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
"And again in his border see Israel set.
"When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
"The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
"To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
"So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
"Shall carry and bring them to their place:
"In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
"Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
"When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
"The oppressor triumph for evermore?

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
"Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
"'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
"Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
"By his servant Moses the watch was set:
"Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
"By the starlight, ,aming a dubious name!
"And if too heavy with sleep—too rash
"With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
"Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
"And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruisèd thus.
"But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
"Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
"Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
"Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed!
"Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

"We withstood Christ, then? Be mindful how
"At least we withstand Barabbas now!
"Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
"To have called these—Christians, had we dared!
"Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
"And Rome make amends for Calvary!

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
"By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
"By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
"By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
"By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
"And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

"We boast our proof that at least the Jew
"Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
"Thy face took never so deep a shade
"But we fought them in it, God our aid!
"A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
"South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[*Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business of the Sermon.*—R. B.]

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST

There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure,

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime, which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of a thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
"May his window serve as my loop of hell
"Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
"I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
"Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
"We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
"As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
"To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral,
"Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
"A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
"And try if Petraja, cool and green,
"Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, 'Too much favor for me so mean!

"But alas! my lady leaves the South;
"Each wind that comes from the Apennine
"Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
"If she quits her palace twice this year,
"To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
"Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring
"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
"Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
"For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
"Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
"To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
"With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?
"And passing her palace, if I list,
"May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth:
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
"Who fashions the clay no love will change,
"And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
"Arrest the remains of young and fair,
"And rivet them while the season's range.

"Make me a face on the window there,
"Waiting as ever, mute the while,
"My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
"Dreary days which the dead must spend
"Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?
" 'I did no more while my heart was warm
" 'Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
"The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
"And the blood that blues the inside arm—

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
"The earthly gift to an end divine?
"A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!
"Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
"Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
"That men may admire, when future suns
"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
" 'How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
"To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
"At idleness which aspires to strive."

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So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
"For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

## PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her hearts endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew

While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

## "CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"

(*See Edgar's song in* "LEAR")

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
  What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
  All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
  For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

If at his counsel I should turn aside
  Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
  Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
  So much as gladness that some end might be.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
  What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
  Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,–
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
  My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

As when a sick man very near to death
  Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
  The tears, and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
  "And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

While some discuss if near the other graves
  Be room enough for this, and when a day
  Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
  He may not shame such tender love and stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
  Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
  So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
  And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think: a burr had been a treasure-trove.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
"Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
" 'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
"Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Giles then, the soul of honor—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
  Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
  Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
  Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end!
  Nought in the distance but the evening, naught
  To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
  That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
  'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
  All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
  How to get from them was no clearer case.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
  Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
  In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
  As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,
  This was the place! those two hills on the right,
  Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
  After a life spent training for the sight!

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
  The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
  Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
  He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
And blew. *"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."*

# MEN AND WOMEN

## HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

I only knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did:
The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane.
Scenting the world, looking it full in the face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads nowhither; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time:
You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vender's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognisance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;

If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbor's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came.
Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and colored like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was't our friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
Our Lord the King has favorites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not!
"Too far above my people,—beneath me!
"I set the watch,—how should the people know?
"Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!"
Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times;
"'St—'St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorised the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys;
We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once!

No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

## AN EPISTLE

### CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapor from His mouth, man's soul),
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapor fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone,—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs);
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labor unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire

With rumors of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh; some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff, and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy.
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem;
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian runagate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,—
In fine, exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,

What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
So, pardon if (lest presently I lose,
In the great press of novelty at hand,
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—or, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse,
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania,—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly—at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served), that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first: the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)—
That he was dead, and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.

"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,

Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus, a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not, except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years must go.

Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.

So, here: we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,

Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness
(Far as I see), as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—"'tis but a word," object,
"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!

He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb

Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet,—
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplext with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
"It should be" balked by "here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face,
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within,
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth:
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.

Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect, whate'er it be,—
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbor the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is,—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.

I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
"To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale, and thee at once?"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field:
As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art,
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners,
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas; it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused—our learning's fate—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious, as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—

How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for my good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad: should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not; though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me!—who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,—
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat;
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed, on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest,
And awe indeed, this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness,
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,—
The man and I. I send thee what is writ,

Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee, with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
"Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
"Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine:
"But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
"And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

## PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15—

I could have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The license and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue:

Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,
Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
This world seemed not the world it was before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—"This I love, or this I hate,
"This likes me more, and this affects me less!"

Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,—
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

## FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
*Weke, weke,* that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember, and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!

But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbors me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
*Flower o' the broom,*
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*
*Flower o' the quince,*
*I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?*
*Flower o' the thyme*—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
*Flower o' the rose,*
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows?*
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father,
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
"Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,

Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books;
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
*Flower o' the clove,*
*All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!*
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?
"In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
"What if at last we get our man of parts,
"We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese

"And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
"And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried, "'Tis ask and have;
"Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
"Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
"That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
"To care about his asthma; it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
"Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
"Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
"As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
"Your business is not to catch men with show,

"With homage to the perishable clay,
"But lift them over it, ignore it all,
"Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
"Your business is to paint the souls of men—
"Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
"It's vapor done up like a new-born babe—
"(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
"It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
"Give us no more of body than shows soul!
"Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
"That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
"Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
"With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?
"Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
"Rub all out, try at it a second time.
"Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
"She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
"Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
"Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,

Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man, no doubt I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
"You're not of the true painters, great and old;
"Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
"Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
"Fag on a flesh, you'll never make the third!"
*Flower o' the pine,*
*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!*
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
*Death for us all, and his own life for each.*)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? All I want's the thing

Settled forever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself;
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say,
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
"Are here already; nature is complete:
"Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)

"There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
"It does not say to folk—remember matins,
"Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
"Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
"But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
"The pious people have so eased their own
"With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
"We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
"Expect another job this time next year,
"For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
"Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,

Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows; don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless, and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
"He made you and devised you, after all,
"Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
"His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
*"Iste perfecit opus!"* So, all smile—

I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back.
Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER")

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.

You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike:
You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape,
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange, now, looks the life he makes us lead:
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!

This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak.
And that cartoon, the second from the door,—

It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too; when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week;
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate, 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies; that's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives—
Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared,
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter),—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or what'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
"Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate, who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think,—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth, there, urged:
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
"The present by the future, what is that?
"Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
"Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;

And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.

'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while,—despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes: I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
"The Roman's is the better when you pray,
"But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
"Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
"Who, were he set to plan and execute
"As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
"Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick

Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do, and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs: the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,—
What's better and what's all I care about,—
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my love.

## THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence

One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli,*
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan

Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve.
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!

Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis,* all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf—at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

## BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church

Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it! Now we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps
Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time:
'Tis break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear!
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(*Status, entourage,* worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value—very much indeed:
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough:
"Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide)
"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
"All alone, we two; he's a clever man:
"And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
"Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine . . .
"'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
"He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen
"Something of mine he relished, some review:
"He's quite above their humbug in his heart,
"Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade.
"I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times:
"How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"
*Che che,* my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take;
You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths:
The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—
You do despise me: your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's: you would not be I.
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me Pope—
(They can't—suppose it for our argument!)
Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you:
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor on a stage played Death,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now.
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realised
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realise one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why!
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealise away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile!
We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six-months' voyage—how prepare?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient: so they are!
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next:
Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese!—
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name?
The captain, or whoever's master here—
You see him screw his face up; what's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!"

If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano, bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)
And mortified you mutter "Well and good;
"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture;
"'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it:
"Though I've the better notion, all agree,
"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
"Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
"I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"
And meantime you bring nothing: never mind—
You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting place.
See my way: we're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his work,—
Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise!
What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:

And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

That way—
Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road;
While, if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?
And so we stumble at truth's very test!
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end's no worse, at least
"We've reason for both colors on the board:
"Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
"And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
The man made for the special life o' the world—
Do you forget him? I remember though!
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
Not so you'll take it,—though you get naught else.

I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we'll try!
'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, "Friends,
"I absolutely and peremptorily
"Believe!"—I say, faith is my waking life:
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking's the main point with us,
And my provision's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What's midnight doubt before the day-spring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognise the night, give dreams their weight—
To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it's best believing, if we may;
You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,

Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honor, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labor or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise:
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend!
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise

Of intellect and learning, but the tact
To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride;
It does so,—which for me's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear:
While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefor! now folk kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:

Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed
I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way:
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near outbang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands!
Our interests's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave.
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalised
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way!
It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course believes;"
And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."
But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet
"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side—
You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—

Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours! Admire me as these may,
You don't. But whom at least do you admire?
Present your own perfection, your ideal,
Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste!
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
Concede the means; allow his head and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)
Good! In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—
We're still at that admission, recollect!)
Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what? it's alive
And shines and leads him, and that's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same?
—Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away!
What's the vague good o' the world, for which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,

"The State, that's I," quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime?*
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
No: for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come!
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?
This present life is all?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an archduchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore I will not.

Take another case;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't—to put the strongest reason first.
"But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice;
"The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
"Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!"
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I

Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realises most?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, "In the face of my soul's works
"Your world is worthless and I touch it not
"Lest I should wrong them"—I'll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold (he never did).
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are:
I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had them when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have them also in my sense.

We play one game; I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be mine?
If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—

The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think?
Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

"Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry,
"You run the same risk really on all sides,
"In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
"As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
"It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
"No more available to do faith's work
"Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.
We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That's our one act, the previous work's his own.
You criticise the soul? it reared this tree—
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?

It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith—then you've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
On hearsay; it's a favorable one:
"But still" (you add), "there was no such good man,
"Because of contradiction in the facts.
"One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
"This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him
"I see he figures as an Englishman."
Well, the two things are reconcilable.
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining—"Still, what matter though they be?
"Blougram concerns me naught, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:
I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
And that's what all the blessed evil's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart

Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live;
The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.
"Leave it in peace," advise the simple folk:
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith's about to die),
And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up beneath his feet—both tug—
He's left himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!

Never leave growing till the life to come!
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely:
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall!
"Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
"Low things confound the high things!" and so forth.
That's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folk do. He's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go!

You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete
But men believe still: ay, but who and where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint,
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? "No," he smiles;
"Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.

Supposing there's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalise on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
"The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,

Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being—
In the evolution of successive spheres—
*Before* its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia: what's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel: where's its need in Spain?
In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?
I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keeps silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you declare,—
All special-pleading done with—truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived

However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that counter-checks.
Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill and thieve,
Or even to be an atheistic priest!
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother savage, club in hand;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves:
I read this in a French book t'other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't,
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all!
You own your instincts? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,

Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!
I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names.
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about:
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face)—
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you: but you are God's sheep, not mine:
*"Pastor est tui Dominus."* You find
In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;

Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat—which means you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir; my age is double yours:
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We both have minds and bodies much alike:
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state?
You're young. I'm old; you must be old one day;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honor in your life,
The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words!
You're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,

Who'd sneer—"the bishop's an arch-hypocrite
"And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.
What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object: such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what's its name?
"The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
"Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.
—Success I recognise and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches! be the first
"Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"—
Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked abroad
About me on the church-door opposite.

You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

---

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
*Episcopus, nec non*—(the deuce knows what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out a mind
Long crumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice),
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
"On every point where cavillers like this
"Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,
"I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
"He's on the ground: if ground should break away
"I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
"Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.

"His ground was over mine and broke the first:
"So, let him sit with me this many a year!"

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound"
Another way than Blougram's purpose was:
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

## CLEON

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece")—
To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,—
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;

And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
And ours is greater, had we skill to know:
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind; and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labor ends.
Now mark me! those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown,
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labor lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream:—but no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far,
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,

Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's art.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large:
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicolored kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? "For (writest thou)
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave naught.
"Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
"The pictures men shall study; while my life,
"Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
"Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
"Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
"The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,

"Set on the promontory which I named.
"And that—some supple courtier of my heir
"Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
"To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
"I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay, perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee,
"Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
"Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
"Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
"All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
"The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
"And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
"Till life's mechanics can no further go—
"And all this joy in natural life is put
"Like fire from off thy finger into each,
"So exquisitely perfect is the same.
"But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are;
"It has them, not they it: and so I choose
"For man, thy last premeditated work
"(If I might add a glory to the scheme),
"That a third thing should stand apart from both,
"A quality arise within his soul,
"Which, intro-active, made to supervise
"And feel the force it has, may view itself,
"And so be happy." Man might live at first

The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
"Let progress end at once,—man make no step
"Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
"Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
"Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!
"Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
"Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,
It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.

What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
"That I may be still happier—for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing; 'tis not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care--where is the sign? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who sees the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case--
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:

But knowing naught, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!

"But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee trip on such a mere word) "what
"Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
"Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
"And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,

We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die:
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

## RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favored, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavor
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.

Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower the Sunflower, sportively.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters, to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed: but nothing baffled me, so ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say, this, Pilgrim dear!

## ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

1855

There they are, my fifty men and women,
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together:
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume

Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her lifetime?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,

Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—"Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance:"
We and Bice bear the loss forever.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artists's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,

So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savors of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
"Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing:
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and misbelieving:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with color,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,

Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—

Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

# DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

## ABT VOGLER

(After he has been extemporising on the musical instrument of his invention)

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round on round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendors burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more, for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;

Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told,
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is naught;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonised?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

## RABBI BEN EZRA

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
"Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
"Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds resist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,

Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn?"

Not once beat "Praise be thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:
"Perfect I call thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All goods things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, then repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work" must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
*That* was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy thirst:

So take and use thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth and death complete the same!

## A DEATH IN THE DESERT

[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene:
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu:*
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi,*
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace:
*Mu* and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.
I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax.]

I said, "If one should wet his lips with wine,
"And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,
"Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
"Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
"And cool his forehead just above the eyes,
"The while a brother, kneeling either side,
"Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,—
"He is not so far gone but he might speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock
Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while;
But in the midmost grotto: since noon's light
Reached there a little, and we would not lose
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,
And laid him in the light where we might see:
For certain smiles began about his mouth,
And his lips moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the cave,
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive:
So that if any thief or soldier passed,
(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—dropped a drop;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left:
But Valens had bethought him, and produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,
Stung by the splendor of a sudden thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, "If a friend declared to me,
"This my son Valens, this my other son,
"Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well
"This lad was very John,—I could believe!
"—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:
"So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
"The soul retreated from the perished brain
"Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
"Through these dull members, done with long ago.
"Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:
"And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows:
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As that played off the first: and, tending up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.

What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man.
I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end to end;
"Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!
"Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
"A little where the fire was: thus I urge
"The soul that served me, till it task once more
"What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,
"And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
"Trying to taste again the truth of things—"
(He smiled)—"their very superficial truth;
"As that ye are my sons, that it is long
"Since James and Peter had release by death,
"And I am only he; your brother John,
"Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
"Remember all! It is not much to say.
"What if the truth broke on me from above
"As once and oft-times? Such might hap again:
"Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
"With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass,
"The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—
"I who now shudder only and surmise
" 'How did your brother bear that sight and live?'

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love
"Through me to men: be naught but ashes here
"That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
"Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
"No one alive who knew (consider this!)
"—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
"That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
"How will it be when none more saith 'I saw'?

"Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.
"Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden teach,
"I went, for many years, about the world,
"Saying 'It was so; so I heard and saw,'
"Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.
"Afterward came the message to myself

"In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
"But simply listen, take a book and write,
"Nor set down other than the given word,
"With nothing left to my arbitrament
"To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.

"Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,
"No call to write again, I found a way,
"And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
"Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe;
"Or I would pen a letter to a friend
"And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:
"Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
"But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
"Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
"To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
"When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things;
"Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I knew,'
"And go all over the old ground again,
"With Antichrist already in the world,
"And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
" 'Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
" 'Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:
" 'Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?'
"I never thought to call down fire on such,
"Or, as in wonderful and early days,
"Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
"But patient stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
"Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
"Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
"Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
"Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
"Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
"Of new significance and fresh result;
"What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
"And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
"For men said, 'It is getting long ago:
" 'Where is the promise of His coming?'—asked
"These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,

"Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
"I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
"Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
"And, in the main, I think such men believed.
"Finally, thus endeavoring, I fell sick,
"Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
"And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
"Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
"We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
"Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
"As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
"Past even the presence of my former self,
"Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
"Till I am found away from my own world,
"Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
"Along with unborn people in strange lands,
"Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
" 'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
" 'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!'

"And how shall I assure them? Can they share
"—They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
"About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
"Living and learning still as years assist
"Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
"With me who hardly am withheld at all,
"But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
"Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
"Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
"We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
"To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
"Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it is;
"—Is, here and now: I apprehend naught else.
"Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
"Is not His love at issue still with sin,
"Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
"Love, wrong and pain, what see I else around?
"Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
"To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
"When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,

"And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
"See I the need yet transciency of both,
"The good and glory consummated thence?
"I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,
"Resume the Power: and in this word 'I see,'
"Lo, there is recognised the Spirit of both
"That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds
"His eye and bids him look. These are, I see;
"But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,
"Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
"I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,
"It had been given a crafty smith to make;
"A tube, he turned on objects brought too close,
"Lying confusedly insubordinate
"For the unassisted eye to master once:
"Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,
"Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear!
"Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
"I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
"Diminished into clearness, proved a point
"And far away: ye would withdraw your sense
"From out eternity, strain it upon time,
"Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,
"Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
"As though a star should open out, all sides,
"Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
"And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
"Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
"How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
"And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
"Such prize despite the envy of the world,
"And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.
"But see the double way wherein we are led,
"How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!
"With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
"And yields mere basement for the soul's emprise,
"Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
"And warmth was cherishing and food was choice

"To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,
"As now to yours and mine; the body sprang
"At once to the height, and stayed: but the soul,—no!
"Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
"In Rome or Athens, may descry some point
"Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;
"And, as thereby the power's whole mass extends,
"So much extends the æther floating o'er,
"The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
"Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
"Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,
"So duly, daily, needs provision be
"For keeping the soul's prowess possible,
"Building new barriers as the old decay,
"Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
"Putting the question ever, 'Does God love,
"'And will ye hold that truth against the world?'
"Ye know there needs no second proof with good
"Gained from our flesh from any earthly source:
"We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
"Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
"And guard it safe through every chance, ye know!
"That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
"How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower, grows old
"(I have been used to hear the pagans own)
"And out of mind; but fire, howe'er its birth,
"Here is it, precious to the sophist now
"Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
"As precious to those satyrs of his play,
"Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
"While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
"Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
"To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
"Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth
"Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
"Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
"For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
"Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
"Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
"Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,

"And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
"As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
"Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than now'?
"To give you answer I am left alive;
"Look at me who was present from the first!
"Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
"My first, befitting me who so had seen:
" 'Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, him
" 'Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
" 'What should wring this from thee!'—ye laugh and ask.
"What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
"The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
"And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,
"And it is written, 'I forsook and fled:'
"There was my trial, and it ended thus.
"Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:
"Another year or two,—what little child,
"What tender woman that had seen no least
"Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
"Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
"Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
"Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
"Already had begun the silent work
"Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
"Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt.
"Teachers were busy, whispering 'All is true
" 'As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
" 'Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
" 'And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'
"Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
"A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
"Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
"This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
"Till imminent was the outcry 'Save our Christ!'
"Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work,
"Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
"What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
" 'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
" 'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!'

"Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
"And may I help to bear it with you all,
"Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
"For if a babe were born inside this grot,
"Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
"Yet had but you sole glimmer in light's place,—
"One loving him and wishful he should learn,
"Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
"Month by month here, so made to understand
"How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:
"I think I could explain to such a child
"There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,
"Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe!'
"It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
"In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,
"Left without me, which must be very soon,
"What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!
"I see you stand conversing, each new face,
"Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;
"Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
"Out of the crowd in some enormous town
"Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
"Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand
"Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
"And no one asks his fellow any more
" 'Where is the promise of His coming?' but
" 'Was he revealed in any of His lives,
" 'As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul?'

"Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
"And let us ask and answer and be saved!
"My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;
"One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
" 'Here is a tale of things done ages since;
" 'What truth was ever told the second day?
" 'Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.
" 'Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love,
" 'And what we love most, power and love in one,
" 'Let us acknowledge on the record here,

" 'Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?
" 'Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?
" 'Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
" 'First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ—
" 'A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
" 'We had such love already in ourselves,
" 'Knew first what else we should not recognize.
" ' 'Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,
" 'And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
" 'Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;
" 'He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's,
" 'With shape, name, story added, man's old way.
" 'How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?
" 'Next try the power: He made and rules the world:
" 'Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
" 'Unless things have been ever as we see.
" 'Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds
" 'Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
" 'Which only of itself now rises, sets,
" 'As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
" 'Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands:
" 'But the new question's whisper is distinct,
" 'Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?
" 'We have the hands, the will; what made and drives
" 'The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
" 'While will and love we do know; marks of these,
" 'Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
" 'As that, to punish or reward our race,
" 'The sun at undue times arose or set
" 'Or else stood still: what do not men affirm?
" 'But earth requires as urgently reward
" 'Or punishment to-day as years ago,
" 'And none expects the sun will interpose:
" 'Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
" 'Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
" 'Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;
" 'Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
" 'Man's!—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
" 'As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
" 'To help these in what forms he called his gods.

" 'First, Jove's brow; Juno's eyes were swept away,
" 'But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long;
" 'At last, will, power, and love discarded these,
" 'So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
" 'What proveth God is otherwise at least?
" 'All else, projection from the mind of man!'

"Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong.
"But place my gospel where I put my hands.

"I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
"That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
"Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn;
"For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
"This imports solely, man should mount on each
"New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
"The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
"Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
"Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
"Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;
"And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
"You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
"To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
"And check the careless step would spoil their birth;
"But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
"Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,
"It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
"Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
"But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
"For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
"Nor miracles need prove it any more.
"Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
"At first of root and stem, saved both till now
"From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
"What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
"And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
"No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er forgets:
"May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

"This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

"I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
"Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
"So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
"When they can eat, babe's-nurture is withdrawn.
"I fed the babe whether it would or no:
"I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
"I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,
" 'Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!'
"I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
" '*And smile at stories how John's word could cure—*
" '*Repeat that miracle and take my faith?*'
"I say, that miracle was duly wrought
"When, save for it, no faith was possible.
"Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
"Whether the change came from our minds which see
"Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
"Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
"See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
"Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
"So faith grew, making void more miracles
"Because too much: they would compel, not help.
"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
"Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
"All questions in the earth and out of it,
"And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
"Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
"In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
"Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
"Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!

"For I say, this is death and the sole death,
"When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
"Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
"And lack of love from love made manifest;
"A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;
"A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.
"With ignorance was surety of a cure.
"When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
" 'What if there lurk a might behind this might?'
"He needed satisfaction God could give,

"And did give, as ye have the written word:
"But when he finds might still redouble might,
"Yet asks, 'Since all is might, what use of will?'
"—Will, the one source of might,—he being man
"With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
"In little how the two combine in large,—
"That man has turned round on himself and stands,
"Which in the course of nature is, to die.
"And when man questioned, 'What if there be love
" 'Behind the will and might, as real as they?'—
"He needed satisfaction God could give,
"And did give, as ye have the written word:
"But when, beholding that love everywhere,
"He reasons, 'Since such love is everywhere,
" 'And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
" 'We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,'—
"How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
"That he must love and would be loved again,
"Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
"Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
"The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
"Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

"If he rejoin, 'But this was all the while
" 'A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
" 'Thy story of the places, names and dates,
" 'Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
" '—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
" 'Whence now the second suffers detriment.
" 'What good of giving knowledge if, because
" 'O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
" 'And why refuse what modicum of help
" 'Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
" 'I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
" 'Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
" 'Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
" 'And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
" 'Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
" 'And evermore, plain truth from man to man.

" 'Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
" 'Put question of his famous play again
" 'How for the ephemerals' sake Jove's fire was filched,
" 'And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
" '*The fact is in the fable,* cry the wise,
" '*Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
" '*Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*
" 'As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
" 'Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
" 'Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?'

"I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
"The very primal thesis, plainest law,
"—Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
"A master to obey, a course to take,
"Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
"Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
"From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
"From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
"How could man have progression otherwise?
"Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
"No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'
"Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
"Man takes that title now if he believes
"Might can exist with neither will nor love,
"In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
"While in himself he recognises love
"No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
"Since if man prove the sole existent thing
"Where these combine, whatever their degree,
"However weak the might or will or love,
"So they be found there, put in evidence,—
"He is as surely higher in the scale
"Than any might with neither love nor will,
"As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
"(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
"Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self—
"Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!
"Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,

"And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
"The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
"His life becomes impossible, which is death.

"But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
"He is mere man, and in humility
"Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
"I point to the immediate consequence
"And say, by such confession straight he falls
"Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
"Made to know that he can know and not more:
"Lower than God who knows all and can all,
"Higher than beasts which know and can so far
"As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
"Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
"While man knows partly but conceives beside,
"Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
"And in this striving, this converting air
"Into a solid he may grasp and use,
"Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
"Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
"Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
"Such progress could no more attend his soul
"Were all it struggles after found at first
"And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
"Than motion wait his body, were all else
"Than it the solid earth on every side,
"Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
"He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
"What he considers that he knows to-day,
"Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;
"Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
"Because he lives, which is to be a man,
"Set to instruct himself by his past self:
"First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
"Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
"Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
"And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
"As midway help till he reach fact indeed.

"The statuary ere he mould a shape
"Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
"The aspiration to produce the same;
"So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
"Cries ever 'Now I have the thing I see':
"Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
"From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.
"How were it had he cried 'I see no face,
" 'No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay'?
"Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,
"And laughed 'It is my shape and lives again!'
"Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,
"Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
"In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
"Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!
"God only makes the live shape at a jet.
"Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?
"The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
"Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;
"But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
"Serve still, and are replaced as time requires:
"By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!
"If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
"Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,
"Indulging every instinct of the soul
"There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

"Such is the burthen of the latest time.
"I have survived to hear it with my ears,
"Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?
"For if there be a further woe than such,
"Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,
"So long as any pulse is left in mine,
"May I be absent even longer yet,
"Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,
"Though I should tarry a new hundred years!"

But he was dead: 'twas about noon, the day
Somewhat declining: we five buried him
That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.
Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
And could not write nor speak, but only loved:
So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!
For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world; they err:
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech
Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.
Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard!
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

---

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

"If Christ, as thou affirmst, be of men
"Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—
"Account Him, for reward of what He was,
"Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
"For see; Himself conceived of life as love.
"Conceived of love as what must enter in,
"Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved:
"Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.
"Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.
"But by this time are many souls set free,
"And very many still retained alive:
"Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
"Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)
"See if, for every finger of thy hands,
"There be not found, that day the world shall end,
"Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word
"That He will grow incorporate with all,
"With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,

"Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?
"Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
"Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
"Or lost!"
But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

## CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS

### OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

['Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh;
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch, and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sun-beams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task;
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that;
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun),
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize
But will not eat the ants: the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself;
He would not make what He mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains;
But did, in envy, listlessness, or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,

Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things he admires and mocks too,—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.

Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss;
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire;
And there, a sting to do his foes offence;
There,—and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry
And give the manikin three sound legs for one;
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,—
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;

'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,—
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well, then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this,
That they, unless through Him, do naught at all,
And must submit? what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt.
Put case, such pipe could prattle and boast, forsooth:
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot make
"With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!"
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him; or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off, and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch;

But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish;
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.

'Tis solace making baubles,—ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle.
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles, for an enchanter's robe,
The eyed skin of a purple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,—
And saith she is Miranda and my wife.
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock, and calls him Caliban,—
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believe: so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things,
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex,
Had He meant other, while His hand was in
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint

Like an orc's armor? Ay,—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose;
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleases Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,—
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
And he wants little,—hungers, aches, not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs;
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each;
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree;
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work—for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know;
Just as He favors Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labor flat: so much for spite.
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles; there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.

Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees.
Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most
When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth:
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue. Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
And, when I threat, bites stoutly in defence;
'Spareth an urchin that, contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and the next day and all days to come,—
Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
"Because he did so yesterday with me,
"And otherwise with such another brute,
"So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay?
'Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means!
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps his strength: no change,—
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day; or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here we are,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth, with the life the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through pain,

Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail, as if to save their lives:
'Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him.
Wherefore, he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked, "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste,—
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it: *"What I hate, be consecrate,*
*"To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate*
*"For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?"*
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,—
That, some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He,
Decrepit, may doze, doze, as good as die.

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[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that has told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!

Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!]

## CONFESSIONS

What is he buzzing in my ears?
"Now that I come to die
"Do I view the world as a vale of tears?"
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

What I viewed there once,—what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue,
Or green, to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"
Is the house o'ertopping all.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind's out of tune—

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house "The Lodge":

What right had a lounger up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together:
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir,—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

## MAY AND DEATH

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

So, for their sake, be May still May!
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

That, they might spare; a certain wood
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

## PROSPICE

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face;
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form:
Yet the strong man must go.
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall;
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past,
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave:
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

## YOUTH AND ART

It once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed "They will see some day
"Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
"Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
"And Grisi's existence embittered!"

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music master.

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did you not pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles,)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!
"That foreign fellow,—who can know
"How she pays, in a playful mood,
"For his tuning her that piano?"

Could you say so, and never say,
"Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
"And I fetch her from over the way,
"Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré,*
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R. A.

Each life unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it forever.

## A FACE

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-colored buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

## APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."—*Paris Newspaper.*

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day
To see the baptism of your Prince;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way:

Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

Only the Doric little Morgue!
The dead-house where you show your drowned:
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton's to be balked!

First came the silent gazers; next,
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!
The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalt seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be a Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart?

You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
You've gained what no Republic missed?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black, poor fellow that is blue!
What fancy was it turned your brain?
Oh, women were the prize for you!
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;
It's safer being meek than fierce:
It's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

# THE RING AND THE BOOK

## VII—POMPILIA

I am just seventeen years and five months old,
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks;
'Tis writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names
At length, so many names for one poor child,
—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable!
Also 'tis writ that I was married there
Four years ago: and they will add, I hope,
When they insert my death, a word or two,—
Omitting all about the mode of death,—
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,
That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have;
Because the boy was born at, so baptized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church:
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems
My own particular place, I always say.
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,
With half his body rushing from the wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life complete,
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—
Gaetano for a reason,—if the friar
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me

Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was
Baptized me: he remembers my whole life
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things
I know are true,—will you remember them?
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,
To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night.

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt!
That had been sin God could not well forgive:
He was too young to smile and save himself.
When they took, two days after he was born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
Said "Why take on so? where is the great loss?
"These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,
"Only begin to smile at the month's end;
"He would not know you, if you kept him here,
"Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks
"Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
"And then I bring him back to be your own,
"And both of you may steal to—we know where!"
The month—there wants of it two weeks this day!
Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she—
Come to say "Since he smiles before the time,
"Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?
"Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!"
Now I shall never see him; what is worse,
When he grows up and gets to be my age,
He will seem hardly more than a great boy;
And if he asks "What was my mother like?"
People may answer "Like girls of seventeen"—

And how can he but think of this and that,
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush
When he regards them as such boys may do?
Therefore I wish someone will please to say
I looked already old though I was young;
Do I not . . . say, if you are by to speak . . .
Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,
Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,
Than the poor Virgin that I used to know
At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—
The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—
Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write!
Such could write what their son should read in time,
Had they a whole day to live out like me.
Also my name is not a common name,
"Pompilia," and may help to keep apart
A little the thing I am from what girls are.
But then how far away, how hard to find
Will anything about me have become,
Even if the boy bethink himself and ask!
No father that he ever knew at all,
Nor ever had—no, never had, I say!
That is the truth,—nor any mother left,
Out of the little two weeks that she lived,
Fit for such memory as might assist:
As good too as no family, no name,
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems
They must not be my parents any more.
That is why something put it in my head
To call the boy "Gaetano"—no old name
For sorrow's sake; I looked up to the sky
And took a new saint to begin anew.
One who has only been made saint—how long?
Twenty-five years: so, carefuller, perhaps,
To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,
Tired out by this time,—see my own five saints!

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard
The history of me as what someone dreamed,
And get to disbelieve it at the last:
Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,
Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—
Just in four days too! All the seventeen years,
Not once did a suspicion visit me
How very different a lot is mine
From any other woman in the world.
The reason must be, 'twas by step and step
It got to grow so terrible and strange.
These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,
Into my neighborhood and privacy,
Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay
And I was found familiarised with fear,
When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried
"Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,
"How comes that arm of yours about a wolf?
"And the soft length,—lies in and out your feet
"And laps you round the knee,—a snake it is!"
And so on.

Well, and they are right enough,
By the torch they hold up now: for first, observe,
I never had a father,—no, nor yet
A mother: my own boy can say at least
"I had a mother whom I kept two weeks!"
Not I, who little used to doubt . . . *I* doubt
Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth?
They loved me always as I love my babe
(—Nearly so, that is—quite so could not be—)
Did for me all I meant to do for him,
Till one surprising day, three years ago,
They both declared, at Rome, before some judge
In some Court where the people flocked to hear,
That really I had never been their child,
Was a mere castaway, the careless crime
Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much
Of a woman known too well,—little to these,
Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood:

What then to Pietro and Violante, both
No more my relatives than you or you?
Nothing to them! You know what they declared.

So with my husband—just such a surprise,
Such a mistake, in that relationship!
Everyone says that husbands love their wives,
Guard them and guide them, give them happiness;
'Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion: well,
You see how much of this comes true in mine!
People indeed would fain have somehow proved
He was no husband: but he did not hear,
Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.
Then there is . . . only let me name one more!
There is the friend,—men will not ask about,
But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,
And think my lover, most surprise of all!
Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,
Giuseppe Caponsacchi: a priest—love,
And love me! Well, yet people think he did.
I am married, he has taken priestly vows,
They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,
"Yes, how he loves you!" "That was love"—they say,
When anything is answered that they ask:
Or else "No wonder you love him"—they say.
Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame—
As if we neither of us lacked excuse,
And anyhow are punished to the full,
And downright love atones for everything!
Nay, I heard read out in the public Court
Before the judge, in presence of my friends,
Letters 'twas said the priest had sent to me,
And other letters sent him by myself,
We being lovers!
Listen what this is like!
When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that's
Violante, you must let me call her so
Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word . . .
She brought a neighbor's child of my own age
To play with me of rainy afternoons;

And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,
We two agreed to find each other out
Among the figures. "Tisbe, that is you,
"With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,
"Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf
"Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back:
"Call off your hound and leave the stag alone!"
"—And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves
"Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,
"And all the rest of you so brown and rough:
"Why is it you are turned a sort of tree?"
You know the figures never were ourselves
Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—
As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—
Looks old, fantastic and impossible:
I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.
—Even to my babe! I thought, when he was born,
Something began for once that would not end,
Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay
For evermore, eternally quite mine.
Well, so he is,—but yet they bore him off,
The third day, lest my husband should lay traps
And catch him, and by means of him catch me.
Since they have saved him so, it was well done:
Yet thence comes such confusion of what was
With what will be,—that late seems long ago,
And, what years should bring round, already come,
Till even he withdraws into a dream
As the rest do: I fancy him grown great,
Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me,
Frowns with the others, "Poor imprudent child!
"Why did you venture out of the safe street?
"Why go so far from help to that lone house?
"Why open at the whisper and the knock?"

Six days ago when it was New-Year's day,
We bent above the fire and talked of him,
What he should do when he was grown and great.
Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm
I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair

And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at last,
"Pompilia's march from bed to board is made,
"Pompilia back again and with a babe,
"Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk!"
Then we all wished each other more New Years.
Pietro began to scheme—"Our cause is gained;
"The law is stronger than a wicked man:
"Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours!
"We will avoid the city, tempt no more
"The greedy ones by feasting and parade,—
"Live at the other villa, we know where,
"Still farther off, and we can watch the babe
"Grow fast in the good air; and wood is cheap
"And wine sincere outside the city gate.
"I still have two or three old friends will grope
"Their way along the mere half-mile of road,
"With staff and lantern on a moonless night
"When one needs talk: they'll find me, never fear,
"And I'll find them a flask of the old sort yet!"
Violante said, "You chatter like a crow:
"Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall to bed:
"Do not too much the first day,—somewhat more
"To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape
"And hood and coat! I have spun wool enough."
Oh what a happy friendly eve was that!

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went—
He was so happy and would talk so much,
Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth
Sight-seeing in the cold,—"So much to see
"I' the churches! Swathe your throat three times!" she cried,
"And, above all, beware the slippery ways,
"And bring us all the news by supper-time!"
He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,
Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,
Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the hearth,
And bade Violante treat us to a flask,
Because he had obeyed her faithfully,
Gone sight-seeing through the seven, and found no church
To his mind like San Giovanni—"There's the fold,

"And all the sheep together, big as cats!
"And such a shepherd, half the size of life,
"Starts up and hears the angel"—when, at the door,
A tap: we started up: you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know;
Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes
Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred—
Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise?—
In telling that first falsehood, buying me
From my poor faulty mother at a price,
To pass off upon Pietro as his child.
If one should take my babe, give him a name,
Say he was not Gaetano and my own,
But that some other woman made his mouth
And hands and feet,—how very false were that!
No good could come of that; and all harm did.
Yet if a stranger were to represent
"Needs must you either give your babe to me
"And let me call him mine for evermore,
"Or let your husband get him"—ah, my God,
That were a trial I refuse to face!
Well, just so here; it proved wrong but seemed right
To poor Violante—for there lay, she said,
My poor real dying mother in her rags,
Who put me from her with the life and all,
Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,
To die the easier by what price I fetched—
Also (I hope) because I should be spared
Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped?
My father,—he was no one, any one,—
The worse, the likelier,—call him—he who came,
Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way,
And left no trace to track by; there remained
Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,
To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing
She could make happy, be made happy with,
This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat?

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.
It is not that because a bud is born

At a wild brier's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
On the oak-tree top,—say "There the bud belongs!"
She thought, moreover, real lies were lies told
For harm's sake; whereas this had good at heart,
Good for my mother, good for me, and good
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,
And needed one to make his life of use,
Receive his house and land when he should die.
Wrong, wrong and always wrong! how plainly wrong!
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,
All the same at her heart: this falsehood hatched,
She could not let it go nor keep it fast.
She told me so,—the first time I was found
Locked in her arms once more after the pain,
When the nuns let me leave them and go home,
And both of us cried all the cares away,—
This it was set her on to make amends,
This brought about the marriage—simply this!
Do let me speak for her you blame so much!
When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,
Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,
So, came and made a speech to ask my hand
For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
Designate just the time for planting me
(The wild-brier slip she plucked to love and wear)
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
And get to be the thing I called myself:
For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,
And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,
Should in a husband have a husband now,
Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,
—All truth and no confusion any more.
I know she meant all good to me, all pain
To herself,—since how could it be aught but pain
To give me up, so, from her very breast,
The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,
She had got used to feel for and find fixed?

She meant well: has it been so ill i' the main?
That is but fair to ask: one cannot judge
Of what has been the ill or well of life,
The day that one is dying,—sorrows change
Into not altogether sorrow-like;
I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
Now it is over, and no danger more.
My child is safe; there seems not so much pain.
It comes, most like, that I am just absolved,
Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed fair,—
One cannot both have and not have, you know,—
Being right now, I am happy and color things.
Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
Softened and bettered: so with other sights:
To me at least was never evening yet
But seemed far beautifuller than its day,
For past is past.

There was a fancy came,
When somewhere, in the journey with my friend,
We stepped into a hovel to get food;
And there began a yelp here, a bark there,—
Misunderstanding creatures that were wroth
And vexed themselves and us till we retired.
The hovel is life: no matter what dogs bit
Or cats scratched in the hovel I break from,
All outside is lone field, moon and such peace—
Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white,
Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,
To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years
Were, each day, happy as the day was long:
This may have made the change too terrible.
I know that when Violante told me first
The cavalier—she meant to bring next morn,
Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand—
Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve
And marry me,—which over, we should go

Home both of us without him as before,
And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,
Such being the correct way with girl-brides,
From whom one word would make a father blush,—
I know, I say, that when she told me this
—Well, I no more saw sense in what she said
Than a lamb does in people clipping wool;
Only lay down and let myself be clipped.
And when next day the cavalier who came—
(Tisbe had told me that the slim young man
With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword
Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,
Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)—
When he proved Guido Franceschini,—old
And nothing like so tall as I myself,
Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,
Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,
He called an owl and used for catching birds,—
And when he took my hand and made a smile—
Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
Seemed hardly more important in the case
Than,—when one gives you, say, a coin to spend,—
Its newness or its oldness; if the piece
Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,
No matter whether you get grime or glare!
Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.
Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece
Would purchase me the praise of those I loved:
About what else should I concern myself?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant,
I supposed this or any man would serve,
No whit the worse for being so uncouth:
For I was ill once and a doctor came
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword,
And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere!—
Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two

Of a black bitter something,—I was cured!
What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face?
It was the physic beautified the man,
Master Malpichi,—never met his match
In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the same!

However, I was hurried through a storm,
Next dark eve of December's deadest day—
How it rained!—through our street and the Lion's-mouth
And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round, covered close,
I was like somethin strange or contraband,—
Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
I fancied we were come to see a corpse
Before the altar which she pulled me toward.
There we found waiting an unpleasant priest
Who proved the brother, not our parish friend,
But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,
Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then
I heard the heavy church-door lock out help
Behind us: for the customary warmth,
Two tapers shivered on the altar. "Quick—
"Lose no time!" cried the priest. And straightway down
From . . . what's behind the altar where he hid—
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I
O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book,
Read here and there, made me say that and this,
And after, told me I was now a wife,
Honored indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,
And therefore turned he water into wine,
To show I should obey my spouse like Christ.
Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,
And I, silent and scared, got down again
And joined my mother who was weeping now.
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,
And both of us on tiptoe found our way
To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.
When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,
All things looked better. At our own house-door,

Violante whispered, "No one syllable
"To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!"
"—Well treated to a wetting, draggle-tails!"
Laughed Pietro as he opened—"Very near
"You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea
"To carry off from roost old dove and young,
"Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite!
"What do these priests mean, praying folk to death
"On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close
"To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"
Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,
Madonna saved me from immodest speech,
I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,
Of Guido—"Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:
"Nothing is changed, however, wine is wine
"And water only water in our house.
"Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
"That cure of the illness: just as I was cured,
"I am married,—neither scarecrow will return."

Three weeks, I chuckled—"How would Giulia stare.
"And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright,
"Were it not impudent for brides to talk!"—
Until one morning, as I sat and sang
At the broidery-frame alone i' the chamber,—loud
Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,
And my name, "Guido," "Paolo," flung like stones
From each to the other! In I ran to see.
There stood the very Guido and the priest
With sly face,—formal but nowise afraid,—
While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce
Able to stutter out his wrath in words;
And this it was that made my mother sob,
As he reproached her—"You have murdered us,
"Me and yourself and this our child beside!"
Then Guido interposed, "Murdered or not,
"Be it enough your child is now my wife!
"I claim and come to take her." Paul put in,

"Consider—kinsman, dare I term you so?—
"What is the good of your sagacity
"Except to counsel in a strait like this?
"I guarantee the parties man and wife
"Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.
"May spilt milk be put back within the bowl—
"The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look
"For counsel to, you fitliest will advise!
"Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good,
"Better we down on knees and scrub the floor,
"Than sigh, 'the waste would make a syllabub!'
"Help us so turn disaster to account,
"So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace
"The bride with favor from the very first,
"Not begin marriage an embittered man!"
He smiled,—the game so wholly in his hands!
While fast and faster sobbed Violante—"Ay,
"All of us murdered, past averting now!
"O my sin, my secret!" and such like.

Then I began to half surmise the truth;
Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,
False, and my mother was to blame, and I
To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed:
I was the chattel that had caused a crime.
I stood mute,—those who tangled must untie
The embroilment. Pietro cried "Withdraw, my child!
"She is not helpful to the sacrifice
"At this stage,—do you want the victim by
"While you discuss the value of her blood?
"For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:
"Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when came
Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,
But movement on her mouth for make-believe
Matters were somehow getting right again.
She bade me sit down by her side and hear.
"You are too young and cannot understand,

"Nor did your father understand at first.
"I wished to benefit all three of us,
"And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,
"I tried to have my way at unaware—
"Obtained him the advantage he refused.
"As if I put before him wholesome food
"Instead of broken victual,—he finds change
"I' the viands, never cares to reason why,
"But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate
"From window, scandalise the neighborhood,
"Even while he smacks his lips,—men's way, my child!
"But either you have prayed him unperverse
"Or I have talked him back into his wits:
"And Paolo was a help in time of need,—
"Guido, not much—my child, the way of men!
"A priest is more a woman than a man,
"And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short,
"Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says:
"My scheme was worth attempting: and bears fruit,
"Gives you a husband and a noble name,
"A palace and no end of pleasant things.
"What do you care about a handsome youth?
"They are so volatile, and tease their wives!
"This is the kind of man to keep the house.
"We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that's all:
"For 'tis arranged we never separate,
"Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints
"Of you that color eve to match with morn.
"In good or ill, we share and share alike,
"And cast our lots into a common lap,
"And all three die together as we lived!
"Only, at Arezzo,—that's a Tuscan town,
"Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,
"But older far and finer much, say folk,—
"In a great palace where you will be queen,
"Know the Archbishop and the Governor,
"And we see homage done you ere we die.
"Therefore, be good and pardon!"—"Pardon what?
"You know things, I am very ignorant:
"All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins
From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,
And took me back to where my father leaned
Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,
As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox
That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—
While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whiles
With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—
And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife
"Until death part you!"

All since is one blank,
Over and ended; a terrific dream.
It is the good of dreams—so soon they go!
Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may—
Cry "The dread thing will never from my thoughts!"
Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,
Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell
Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;
And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,
Where is the harm o' the horror? Gone! So here.
I know I wake,—but from what? Blank, I say!
This is the note of evil: for good lasts.
Even when Don Celestine bade "Search and find!
"For your soul's sake, remember what is past,
"The better to forgive it,"—all in vain!
What was fast getting indistinct before,
Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps,
Between that first calm and this last, four years
Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you know.
I am held up, amid the nothingness,
By one or two truths only—thence I hang,
And there I live,—the rest is death or dream,
All but those points of my support. I think
Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square
O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House:
There was a foreigner had trained a goat,
A shuddering white woman of a beast,
To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks
Put close, which gave the creature room enough:

When she was settled there he, one by one,
Took away all the sticks, left just the four
Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,
There she kept firm, all underneath was air.
So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,
Some hand would interpose and save me—hand
Which proved to be my friend's hand: and,—blest bliss,—
That fancy which began so faint at first,
That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,
Which I perceive was promise of my child,
The light his unborn face sent long before,—
God's way of breaking the good news to flesh.
That is all left now of those four bad years.
Don Celestine urged "But remember more!
"Other men's faults may help me find your own.
"I need the cruelty exposed, explained,
"Or how can I advise you to forgive?"
He thought I could not properly forgive
Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is true:
For, bringing back reluctantly to mind
My husband's treatment of me,—by a light
That's later than my life-time, I review
And comprehend much and imagine more,
And have but little to forgive at last.
For now,—be fair and say,—is it not true
He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
To get enriched by marriage? Marriage gave
Me and no money, broke the compact so:
He had a right to ask me on those terms,
As Pietro and Violante to declare
They would not give me: so the bargain stood:
They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved,
Became unkind with me to punish them.
They said 'twas he began deception first,
Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,
Kept promise: what of that, suppose it were?
Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate
For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,
And never let our ears have done with noise?

Then my poor parents took the violent way
To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,
Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind!
As I myself was, that is sure, who else
Had understood the mystery: for his wife
Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.
It seems as if I might have interposed,
Blunted the edge of their resentment so,
Since he vexed me because they first vexed him;
"I will entreat them to desist, submit,
"Give him the money and be poor in peace,—
"Certainly not go tell the world: perhaps
"He will grow quiet with his gains."

Yes, say
Something to this effect and you do well!
But then you have to see first: I was blind.
That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,
The indirect, the unapproved of God:
You cannot find their author's end and aim,
Not even to substitute your good for bad,
Your straight for the irregular; you stand
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep
That miss a man's mind, anger him just twice
By trial at repairing the first fault.
Thus, when he blamed me, "You are a coquette,
"A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,
"You look love-lures at theatre and church,
"In walk, at window!"—that, I knew, was false:
But why he charged me falsely, whither sought
To drive me by such charge,—how could I know?
So, unaware, I only made things worse.
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
Window, church, theatre, for good and all,
As if he had been in earnest: that, you know,
Was nothing like the object of his charge.
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate
The priest, whose name she read when she would read
Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear
Though I could read no word of,—he should cease

Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,
Cease from so much as even pass the street
Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance
I was just thwarting Guido's true intent;
Which was, to bring about a wicked change
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,
Till both of us were taken in a crime.
He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,
Simulate folly: but,—wrong or right, the wish,—
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain
It follows,—if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,
Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
I' the whole sad strange plot, the grotesque intrigue
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,
Be other man and woman than we were!
Think it out, you who have the time! for me,—
I cannot say less; more I will not say.
Leave it to God to cover and undo!
Only, my dulness should not prove too much!
—Not prove that in a certain other point
Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,
If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!
Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent
A way to make my husband's favor come.
That is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . . .
—Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed
I had no right to give nor he to take;
We being in estrangement, soul from soul;
Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
Inquiring into privacies of life,
—Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)
Nowise entitled to exemption there.
Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed
Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,
"Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"

But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice
Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!—
Now I have got to die and see things clear.
Remember I was barely twelve years old—
A child at marriage: I was let alone
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
First . . . but I need not think of that again—
Over and ended! Try and take the sense
Of what I signify, if it must be so.
After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,
Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,
"We have been man and wife six months almost:
"How long is this your comedy to last?
"Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"
At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—
And gain the Archbishop's house—he stands for God—
And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,
Praying him hinder what my estranged soul
Refused to bear, though patient of the rest:
"Place me within a convent," I implored—
"Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
"You praise in her you bid me imitate!"
What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance!
"Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar
"Virginity,—'tis virtue or 'tis vice.
"That which was glory in the Mother of God
"Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
"Created to be mother of mankind.
"Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech
" 'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth'—
"Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain
" 'Single'—why, she had spared herself forthwith
"Further probation by the apple and snake,
"Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—
"If motherhood be qualified impure,
"I catch you making God command Eve sin!
"—A blasphemy so like these Molinists',
"I must suspect you dip into their books."
Then he pursued " 'Twas in your covenant!"

No! There my husband never used deceit.
He never did by speech nor act imply
"Because of our soul's yearning that we meet
"And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine
"Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,
"—All which means, for the love of you and me,
"Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"
He only stipulated for the wealth;
Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain—
Dreadfully honest also—"Since our souls
"Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,
"Give me the fleshly vesture I can reach
"And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!"—
Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake
Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say,
I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's smile;
—It seemed so stale and worn a way o' the world,
As though 'twere nature frowning—"Here is Spring,
"The sun shines as he shone at Adam's fall,
"The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:
"What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth
"Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?"
Something in this style he began with me.
Last he said, savagely for a good man,
"This explains why you call your husband harsh,
"Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God's Bread!
"The poor Count has to manage a mere child
"Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things
"Their duty was and privilege to teach,—
"Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh
"And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me!"
Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.
"I am not ignorant,—know what I say,
"Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.
"Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.
"I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest
"My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo—
"Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love
"Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,

"For he solicits me and says he loves,
"The idle young priest with naught else to do.
"My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.
"Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"
"—More scandal, and against a priest this time!
"What, 'tis the Canon now?"—less snappishly—
"Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,
"The rod were too advanced a punishment!
"Let's try the honeyed cake. A parable!
" 'Without a parable spake He not to them.'
"There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,
"Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May.
"And, to the tree, said . . . either the spirit o' the fig,
"Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,
"Archbishop of the orchard—had I time
"To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed
"It might be the Creator's self, but then
"The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,—
"Well, anyhow, one with authority said
" 'Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—
" 'The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!'
" 'Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,
" 'I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:
" 'He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,
" 'Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!'
"So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.
"He flew off, left her,—did the natural lord,—
"And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps
"Found her out, feasted on her to the shuck:
"Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite!
"The moral,—fools elude their proper lot,
"Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.
"Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick!
"Which if his Canon brother chance to see,
"He will the sooner back to book again."

So, home I did go; so, the worst befell:
So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,
And hardly that, and certainly no more.
For, miserable consequence to me,

My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at all,
His brother's boldness grew effrontery soon,
And my last stay and comfort in myself
Was forced from me: henceforth I looked to God
Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.
God's glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,
Was witness why all lights were quenched inside:
Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.

So, when I made the effort, freed myself,
They said—"No care to save appearance here!
"How cynic,—when, how wanton, were enough!"
—Adding, it all came of my mother's life—
My own real mother, whom I never knew,
Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong)
Through being all her life, not my four years,
At mercy of the hateful: every beast
O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,
Trample the silver into mud so murk
Heaven could not find itself reflected there.
Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy pool,
"Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
"To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank!"

Well, since she had to bear this brand—let me!
The rather do I understand her now,
From my experience of what hate calls love,—
Much love might be in what their love called hate.
If she sold . . . what they call, sold . . . me, her child—
I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
That I at least might try be good and pure,
Begin to live untempted, not go doomed
And done with ere once found in fault, as she.
Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?
Why should I trust those that speak ill of you,
When I mistrust who speaks even well of them?
Why, since all bound to do me good, did harm,
May not you, seeming as you harmed me most,
Have meant to do most good—and feed your child

From bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree
But drew bough back from, nor let one fruit fall?
This it was for you sacrificed your babe?
Gained just this, giving your heart's hope away
As I might give mine, loving it as you,
If . . . but that never could be asked of me!

There, enough! I have my support again,
Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,
Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give
Outright to God, without a further care,—
But not to any parent in the world,—
So to be safe: why is it we repine?
What guardianship were safer could we choose?
All human plans and projects come to nought;
My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that: no plan nor project! God shall care!

And now you are not tired? How patient then
All of you,—oh yes, patient this long while
Listening, and understanding, I am sure!
Four days ago, when I was sound and well
And like to live, no one would understand.
People were kind, but smiled "And what of him,
"Your friend, whose tonsure the rich dark-brown hides?
"There, there!—your lover, do we dream he was?
"A priest too—never were such naughtiness!
"Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,
"After the shy pale lady,—lay so light
"For a moment in his arms, the lucky one!"

And so on: wherefore should I blame you much?
So we are made, such difference in minds,
Such difference too in eyes that see the minds!
That man, you misinterpret and misprise—
The glory of his nature, I had thought,
Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth
Through every atom of his act with me:
Yet where I point you, through the crystal shrine,
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,

You all descry a spider in the midst.
One says "The head of it is plain to see,"
And one, "They are the feet by which I judge,"
All say, "Those films were spun by nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God,
Nor think of him again, for gratitude.
Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend itself
In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,
And people need assurance in their doubt
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,
The weak a savior and the vile a foe,—
Let him be present, by the name invoked,
Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!

There,
Strength comes already with the utterance!
I will remember once more for his sake
The sorrow: for he lives and is belied.
Could he be here, how he would speak for me!

I had been miserable three drear years
In that dread palace and lay passive now,
When I first learned there could be such a man.
Thus it fell: I was at a public play,
In the last days of Carnival last March,
Brought there I knew not why, but now know well.
My husband put me where I sat, in front;
Then crouched down, breathed cold through me from behind,
Stationed i' the shadow,—none in front could see,—
I, it was, faced the stranger-throng beneath,
The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one stare,
Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,
Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged
"True life is only love, love only bliss:
"I love thee—thee I love!" then they embraced.
I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls,—

Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes,—
My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome
On wings of music, waft of measured words,—
Set me down there, a happy child again
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,
Hearing my parents praise past festas more,
And seeing they were old if I was young,
Yet wondering why they still would end discourse
With "We must soon go, you abide your time,
"And,—might we haply see the proper friend
"Throw his arm over you and make you safe!"

Sudden I saw him; into my lap there fell
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream
And brought me from the air and laid me low,
As ruined as the soaring bee that's reached
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay:
I looked to see who flung them, and I faced
This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
Whoever flung them, his was not the hand,—
Up rose the round face and good-natured grin
Of one who, in effect, had played the prank,
From covert close beside the earnest face,—
Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.
He was my husband's cousin, privileged
To throw the thing: the other, silent, grave,
Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
"Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee!"
The psalm runs not "I hope, I pray for wings,"—
Not "If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast,"—
Simply "How good it were to fly and rest,
"Have hope now, and one day expect content!
"How well to do what I shall never do!"
So I said, "Had there been a man like that,
"To lift me with his strength out of all strife
"Into the calm, how I could fly and rest!
"I have a keeper in the garden here

"Whose sole employment is to strike me low
"If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
"Life means with me successful feigning death,
"Lying stone-like, eluding notice so,
"Foregoing here the turf and there the sky.
"Suppose that man had been instead of this!"

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
—Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat—
"Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard!
"Because you must be hurt, to look austere
"As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend
"A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close?
"Keep on your knees, do! Beg her to forgive!
"My cornet battered like a cannon-ball.
"Good-bye, I'm gone!"—nor waited the reply.

That night at supper, out my husband broke,
"Why was that throwing, that buffoonery?
"Do you think I am your dupe? What man would dare
"Throw comfits in a stranger lady's lap?
" 'Twas knowledge of you bred such insolence
"In Caponsacchi; he dared shoot the bolt,
"Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.
"How could you see him this once and no more,
"When he is always haunting hereabout
"At the street-corner or the palace-side,
"Publishing my shame and your impudence?
"You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you think?"
"O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick?"
Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust.

All this, now,—being not so strange to me,
Used to such misconception day by day
And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this time,
More quietly than woman should perhaps;
Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue.

Then he said, "Since you play the ignorant
"I shall instruct you. This amour—commenced
"Or finished or midway in act, all's one,—

" 'Tis the town-talk; so my revenge shall be.
"Does he presume because he is a priest?
"I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink
"His lily-scented cassock through and through,
"Next time I catch him underneath your eaves!"
But he had threatened with the sword so oft
And, after all, not kept his promise. All
I said was "Let God save the innocent!
"Moreover death is far from a bad fate.
"I shall go pray for you and me, not him;
"And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,
"Life." So, I slept.

There may have elapsed a week,
When Margherita,—called my waiting-maid,
Whom it is said my husband found too fair—
Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,
Who never once would let the matter rest
From that night forward, but rang changes still
On this the thrust and that the shame, and how
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,
And what a paragon was this same priest
She talked about until I stopped my ears,—
She said, "A week is gone; you comb your hair,
"Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,
"Till night comes round again,—so, waste a week
"As if your husband menaced you in sport.
"Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks?
"Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man
"Who made and sang the rhymes about me once!
"For why? They sent him to the wars next day.
"Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend
"Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast,—
"The swarth skins of our city in dispute:
"For, though he paid me proper compliment,
"The Count well knew he was besotted with
"Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,
"(As all the town knew save my foreigner)
"He found and wedded presently,—'Why need
" 'Better revenge?'—the Count asked. But what's here?

"A priest that does not fight, and cannot wed,
"Yet must be dealt with! If the Count took fire
"For the poor pastime of a minute,—me—
"What were the conflagration for yourself,
"Countess and lady-wife and all the rest?
"The priest will perish; you will grieve too late:
"So shall the city-ladies' handsomest
"Frankest and liberalest gentleman
"Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog
"Hanging's too good for. Is there no escape?
"Were it not simple Christian charity
"To warn the priest be on his guard,—save him
"Assured death, save yourself from causing it?
"I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,
"A ring to show for token! Mum's the word!"

I answered "If you were, as styled, my maid,
"I would command you: as you are, you say,
"My husband's intimate,—assist his wife
"Who can do nothing but entreat 'Be still!'
"Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,
"Leave help to God as I am forced to do!
"There is no other help or we should craze,
"Seeing such evil with no human cure.
"Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,
"Can make an angry violent heart subside.
"Why should we venture teach Him governance?
"Never address me on this subject more!"

Next night she said "But I went, all the same,
"—Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,
"And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.
"I told him 'Sir, my mistress is a stone:
" 'Why should you harm her for no good you get?
" 'For you do harm her—prowl about our place
" 'With the Count never distant half the street,
" 'Lurking at every corner, would you look!
" ' 'Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.
" 'Are there not other beauties at your beck?
" 'We all know, Donna This and Monna That

" 'Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze!
" 'Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold!'
"And he—oh, he turned first white and then red,
"And then—'To her behest I bow myself,
" 'Whom I love with my body and my soul:
" 'Only a word i' the bowing! See, I write
" 'One little word, no harm to see or hear!
" 'Then, fear no further!' This is what he wrote.
"I know you cannot read,—therefore, let me!
" *'My idol!'* " . . .

But I took it from her hand
And tore it into shreds. "Why join the rest
"Who harm me? Have I ever done you wrong?
"People have told me 'tis you wrong myself:
"Let it suffice I either feel no wrong
"Or else forgive it,—yet you turn my foe!
"The others hunt me and you throw a noose!"

She muttered "Have your wilful way!" I slept.

Whereupon . . . no, I leave my husband out!
It is not to do him more hurt, I speak.
Let it suffice, when misery was most,
One day, I swooned and got a respite so.
She stooped as I was slowly coming to,
This Margherita, ever on my trace,
And whispered—"Caponsacchi!"

If I drowned,
But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,
And found their first sight was a star! I turned—
For the first time, I let her have her will,
Heard passively,—"The imposthume at such head,
"One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve,—
"And still no glance the good physician's way
"Who rids you of the torment in a trice!
"Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.
"He may prevent your husband, kill himself,
"So desperate and all fordone is he!

"Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day!
"A sonnet from Mirtillo, *'Peerless fair . . .*
"All poetry is difficult to read,
"—The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks
"Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,
"And for that purpose asks an interview.
"I can write, I can grant it in your name,
"Or, what is better, lead you to his house.
"Your husband dashes you against the stones;
"This man would place each fragment in a shrine:
"You hate him, love your husband!"

I returned,
"It is not true I love my husband,—no,
"Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak,
"—Assured that what you say is false, the same:
"Much as when once, to me a little child,
"A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,
"A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,
"Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head
"In his two hands, 'Here's she will let me speak!
" 'You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,
" 'I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth;
" 'And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed to-day,
" 'Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh!
" 'The angels, met in conclave, crowned me!'—thus
"He gibbered and I listened; but I knew
"All was delusion, ere folk interposed
" 'Unfasten him, the maniac!' Thus I know
"All your report of Caponsacchi false,
"Folly or dreaming; I have seen so much
"By that adventure at the spectacle,
"The face I fronted that one first, last time:
"He would belie it by such words and thoughts.
"Therefore while you profess to show him me,
"I ever see his own face. Get you gone!"

"—That will I, nor once open mouth again,—
"No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost!
"On your head be the damage, so adieu!"

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,
Till . . . what a strange thing now is to declare!
Since I say anything, say all if true!
And how my life seems lengthened as to serve!
It may be idle or inopportune,
But, true?—why, what was all I said but truth,
Even when I found that such as are untrue
Could only take the truth in through a lie?
Now—I am speaking truth to the Truth's self:
God will lend credit to my words this time

It had got half through April. I arose
One vivid daybreak,—who had gone to bed
In the old way my wont those last three years,
Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.
The last sound in my ear, the over-night,
Had been a something let drop on the sly
In prattle by Margherita, "Soon enough
"Gaieties end, now Easter's past: a week,
"And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome,—
"Everyone leaves the town for Rome, this Spring,—
"Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,
"Resigns himself and follows with the flock."
I heard this drop and drop like rain outside
Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke:
So had I heard with like indifference,
"And Michael's pair of wings will arrive first
"At Rome, to introduce the company,
"And bear him from our picture where he fights
"Satan,—expect to have that dragon loose
"And never a defender!"—my sole thought
Being still, as night came, "Done, another day!
"How good to sleep and so get nearer death!"—
When, what, first thing at daybreak, pierced the sleep
With a summons to me? Up I sprang alive,
Light in me, light without me, everywhere
Change! A broad yellow sunbeam was let fall
From heaven to earth,—a sudden drawbridge lay,
Along which marched a myriad merry motes,
Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed

In rival dance, companions new-born too.
On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed
Shook diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,
As first one, then another bird leapt by,
And light was off, and lo was back again,
Always with one voice,—where are two such joys?—
The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth,
Stood on the terrace,—o'er the roofs such sky!
My heart sang, "I too am to go away,
"I too have something I must care about,
"Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!
"The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,
"And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,
"Falls out of the procession that befits,
"From window here to window there, with all
"The world to choose,—so well he knows his course?
"I have my purpose and my motive too,
"My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!
"Had I been dead! How right to be alive!
"Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,
"Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword
"Or the poison,—poison, sword, was but a trick,
"Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!
"My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!
"Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, nameless be
"The deed I could have dared against myself!
"Now—see if I will touch an unripe fruit,
"And risk the health I want to have and use!
"Not to live, now, would be the wickedness,—
"For life means to make haste and go to Rome
"And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once!"

Now, understand here, by no means mistake!
Long ago had I tried to leave that house
When it seemed such procedure would stop sin;
And still failed more the more I tried—at first
The Archbishop, as I told you,—next, our lord
The Governor,—indeed I found my way,
I went to the great palace where he rules,
Though I knew well 'twas he who,—when I gave

A jewel or two, themselves had given me,
Back to my parents,—since they wanted bread,
They who had never let me want a nosegay,—he
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept
What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly theirs,
Though all the while my husband's most of all!
I knew well who had spoke the word wrought this:
Yet, being in extremity, I fled
To the Governor, as I say,—scarce opened lip
When—the cold cruel snicker close behind—
Guido was on my trace, already there,
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and smile,
And I—pushed back to him and, for my pains
Paid with . . . but why remember what is past?
I sought out a poor friar the people call
The Roman, and confessed my sin which came
Of their sin,—that fact could not be repressed,—
The frightfulness of my despair in God:
And, feeling, through the grate, his horror shake,
Implored him, "Write for me who cannot write,
"Apprise my parents, make them rescue me!
"You bid me be courageous and trust God:
"Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and write
" 'Dear friends, who used to be my parents once,
" 'And now declare you have no part in me,
" 'This is some riddle I want wit to solve,
" 'Since you must love me with no difference.
" 'Even suppose you altered,—there's your hate,
" 'To ask for: hate of you two dearest ones
" 'I shall find liker love than love found here,
" 'If husbands love their wives. Take me away
" 'And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,
" 'Even the scorpions! How I shall rejoice!
"Write that and save me!" And he promised—wrote
Or did not write; things never changed at all:
He was not like the Augustinian here!
Last, in a desperation I appealed
To friends, whoever wished me better days,
To Guillichini, that's of kin,—"What, I—
"Travel to Rome with you? A flying gout

"Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg!"
Then I tried Conti, used to brave—laugh back
The louring thunder when his cousin scowled
At me protected by his presence: "You—
"Who well know what you cannot save me from,—
"Carry me off! What frightens you, a priest?"
He shook his head, looked grave—"Above my strength!
"Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth;
"A formidabler foe than I dare fret:
"Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size!
"Of course I am a priest and Canon too,
"But . . . by the bye . . . though both, not quite so bold
"As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest,
"The personage in such ill odor here
"Because of the reports—pure birth o' the brain!
"Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint George
"To slay the monster, set the Princess free,
"And have the whole High-Altar to himself:
"I always think so when I see that piece
"I' the Pieve, that's his church and mine, you know:
"Though you drop eyes at mention of his name!"

That name had got to take a half-grotesque,
Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,
Like any by-word, broken bit of song
Born with a meaning, changed by mouth and mouth
That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance
Bids, till it now means nought but ugliness
And perhaps shame.

—All this intends to say,
That, over-night, the notion of escape
Had seemed distemper, dreaming; and the name,—
Not the man, but the name of him, thus made
Into a mockery and disgrace,—why, she
Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,
"I name his name, and there you start and wince
"As criminal from the red tongs' touch!"—yet now,
Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me bright,

Choosing which butterfly should bear my news,—
The white, the brown one, or that timier blue,—
The Margherita, I detested so,
In she came—"The fine day, the good Spring time!
"What, up and out at window? That is best.
"No thought of Caponsacchi?—who stood there
"All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,
"Under the pelting of your water-spout—
"Looked last look at your lattice ere he leave
"Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome.
"Ay, go to looking-glass and make you fine,
"While he may die ere touch one least loose hair
"You drag at with the comb in such a rage!"

I turned—"Tell Caponsacchi he may come!"

"Tell him to come? Ah, but, for charity,
"A truce to fooling! Come? What,—come this eve?
"Peter and Paul! But I see through the trick!
"Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his head.
"Flung from your terrace! No joke, sincere truth?"

How plainly I perceived hell flash and fade
O' the face of her,—the doubt that first paled joy,
Then, final reassurance I indeed
Was caught now, never to be free again!
What did I care?—who felt myself of force
To play with silk, and spurn the horsehair-springe.

"But—do you know that I have bade him come,
"And in your own name? I presumed so much,
"Knowing the thing you needed in your heart.
"But somehow—what had I to show in proof?
"He would not come: half-promised, that was all,
"And wrote the letters you refused to read.
"What is the message that shall move him now?"

"After the Ave Maria, at first dark,
"I will be standing on the terrace, say!"

"I would I had a good long lock of hair
"Should prove I was not lying! Never mind!"
Off she went—"May he not refuse, that's all—
"Fearing a trick!"

I answered, "He will come."
And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up
To God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at last He puts forth might and saves.
An old rhyme came into my head and rang
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God,
Hid herself, from the Paynims that pursued,
In a cave's heart; until a thunderstorm,
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch and prey:
And they laughed—"Thanks to lightning, ours at last!"
And she cried "Wrath of God, assert His love!
"Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His child!"
And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its flash,
Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful sword
She brandished till pursuers strewed the ground,
So did the souls within them die away,
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded, safe,
She walked forth to the solitudes and Christ:
So should I grasp the lightning, and be saved!

And still, as the day wore, the trouble grew
Whereby I guessed there would be born a star,
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at last
Where the deliverer waited me: the same
Silent and solemn face, I first descried
At the spectacle, confronted mine once more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so
The manhood, wasted then, was still at watch
To save me yet a second time: no change
Here, though all else changed in the changing world!

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade,
In some such sense as this, whatever the phrase.

"Friend, foolish words were borne from you to me;
"Your soul behind them is the pure strong wind,
"Not dust and feathers which its breath may bear:
"These to the witless seem the wind itself,
"Since proving thus the first of it they feel.
"If by mischance you blew offence my way,
"The straws are dropt, the wind desists no whit,
"And how such strays were caught up in the street
"And took a motion from you, why inquire?
"I speak to the strong soul, no weak disguise.
"If it be truth,—why should I doubt it truth?—
"You serve God specially, as priests are bound,
"And care about me, stranger as I am,
"So far as wish my good,—that miracle,
"I take to intimate He wills you serve
"By saving me,—what else can He direct?
"Here is the service. Since a long while now,
"I am in course of being put to death;
"While death concerned nothing but me, I bowed
"The head and bade, in heart, my husband strike.
"Now I imperil something more, it seems,
"Something that's trulier me than this myself,
"Something I trust in God and you to save.
"You go to Rome, they tell me: take me there,
"Put me back with my people!"

He replied—
The first word I heard ever from his lips,
All himself in it,—an eternity
Of speech, to match the immeasurable depth
O' the soul that then broke silence—"I am yours."

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,
Lead on, nor pause before it should stand still
Above the House o' the Babe,—my babe to be,
That knew me first and thus made me know him,
That had his right of life and claim on mine,

And would not let me die till he was born,
But pricked me at the heart to save us both,
Saying "Have you the will? Leave God the way!"
And the way was Caponsacchi—"mine," thank God!
He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light! I know,
Next night there was a cloud came, and not he:
But I prayed through the darkness till it broke
And let him shine. The second night, he came.
"The plan is rash; the project desperate:
"In such a flight needs must I risk your life,
"Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,
"Ground for your husband's rancor and revenge"—
So he began again, with the same face.
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star
Turning now red that was so white before—
One service apprehended newly: just
A word of mine and there the white was back!

"No, friend, for you will take me! 'Tis yourself
"Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I trust
"In the compensating great God: enough!
"I know you: when is it that you will come?"

"To-morrow at the day's dawn." Then I heard
What I should do: how to prepare for flight
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade
"—You, whom I loathe, beware you break my sleep
"This whole night! Couch beside me like the corpse
"I would you were!" The rest, you know, I think—
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped.

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus Christ!
Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,
"He hath a devil"—say he was Thy saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show—unshroud
In Thine own time the glory of the soul

If aught obscure,—if ink-spot from vile pens
Scribbling a charge against him—(I was glad
Then, for the first time, that I could not write)—
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,
'Tis otherwise: let men take, sift my thoughts
—Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach!
I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die,
"Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!"
Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand
Holding my hand across the world,—a sense
That reads, as only such can read, the mark
God sets on woman, signifying so
She should—shall peradventure—be divine;
Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars the print
And makes confusion, leaves the thing men see,
—Not this man sees,—who from his soul, rewrites
The obliterated charter,—love and strength
Mending what's marred, "So kneels a votarist,
"Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot
"Where shrine once was, where temple yet may be,
"Purging the place but worshipping the while,
"By faith and not by sight, sight clearest so,—
"Such way the saints work,"—says Don Celestine.
But I, not privileged to see a saint
Of old when such walked earth with crown and palm,
If I call "saint" what saints call something else—
The saints must bear with me, impute the fault
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year
Nor recognise the orb which Spring-flowers know.
But if meanwhile some insect with a heart
Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift joy—
Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my dwarfed cup,
Crept close to me, brought lustre for the dark,
Comfort against the cold,—what though excess
Of comfort should miscall the creature—sun?
What did the sun to hinder while harsh hands
Petal by petal, crude and colorless,
Tore me? This one heart gave me all the Spring!

Is all told? There's the journey: and where's time
To tell you how that heart burst out in shine?
Yet certain points do press on me too hard.
Each place must have a name, though I forget:
How strange it was—there where the plain begins
And the small river mitigates its flow—
When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank,
And he divined what surge of bitterness,
In overtaking me, would float me back
Whence I was carried by the striding day—
So,—"This grey place was famous once," said he—
And he began that legend of the place
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,
And told me all about a brave man dead,
Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
How did he know too,—at that town's approach
By the rock-side,—that in coming near the signs
Of life, the house-roofs and the church and tower,
I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,
As if the broken circlet joined again,
Tightened itself about me with no break,—
As if the town would turn Arezzo's self,—
The husband there,—the friends my enemies,
All ranged against me, not an avenue
To try, but would be blocked and drive me back
On him,—this other, . . . oh the heart in that!
Did not he find, bring, put into my arms
A new-born babe?—and I saw faces beam
Of the young mother proud to teach me joy,
And gossips round expecting my surprise
At the sudden hole through earth that lets in heaven.
I could believe himself by his strong will
Had woven around me what I thought the world
We went along in, every circumstance,
Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped so well!
For, through the journey, was it natural
Such comfort should arise from first to last?
As I look back, all is one milky way;
Still bettered more, the more remembered, so
Do new stars bud while I but search for old,

And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him—
Him I now see make the shine everywhère.
Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,
The cloud of weariness about my soul
Clogging too heavily, sucked down all sense,—
Still its last voice was, "He will watch and care;
"Let the strength go, I am content: he stays!"
I doubt not he did stay and care for all—
From that sick minute when the head swam round,
And the eyes looked their last and died on him,
As in his arms he caught me, and, you say,
Carried me in, that tragical red eve,
And laid me where I next returned to life
In the other red of morning, two red plates
That crushed together, crushed the time between,
And are since then a solid fire to me,—
When in, my dreadful husband and the world
Broke,—and I saw him, master, by hell's right,
And saw my angel helplessly held back
By guards that helped the malice—the lamb prone,
The serpent towering and triumphant—then
Came all the strength back in a sudden swell,
I did for once see right, do right, give tongue
The adequate protest: for a worm must turn
If it would have its wrong observed by God.
I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside
That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me, lay low
The neutraliser of all good and truth.
If I sinned so,—never obey voice more
O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us—"Bear!"
Not—"Stand by, bear to see my angels bear!"
I am clear it was on impulse to serve God
Not save myself,—no—nor my child unborn!
Had I else waited patiently till now?—
Who saw my old kind parents, silly-sooth
And too much trustful, for their worst of faults,
Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and starved, cast out
Into the kennel: I remonstrated,
Then sank to silence, for,—their woes at end,
Themselves gone,—only I was left to plague.

If only I was threatened and belied,
What matter? I could bear it and did bear;
It was a comfort, still one lot for all:
They were not persecuted for my sake
And I, estranged, the single happy one.
But when at last, all by myself I stood
Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise,
Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,
And take the angel's hand was sent to help—
And found the old adversary athwart the path—
Not my hand simply struck from the angel's, but
The very angel's self made foul i' the face
By the fiend who struck there,—that I would not bear,
That only I resisted! So, my first
And last resistance was invincible.
Prayers move God; threats, and nothing else, move men!
I must have prayed a man as he were God
When I implored the Governor to right
My parents' wrongs: the answer was a smile.
The Archbishop,—did I clasp his feet enough,
Hide my face hotly on them, while I told
More than I dared make my own mother know?
The profit was—compassion and a jest.
This time, the foolish prayers were done with, right
Used might, and solemnised the sport at once.
All was against the combat: vantage, mine?
The runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife,
In company with the plan-contriving priest?
Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I struck, bare,
At foe from head to foot in magic mail,
And off it withered, cobweb-armory
Against the lightning! 'Twas truth singed the lies
And saved me, not the vain sword nor weak speech!

You see, I will not have the service fail!
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
Others may want and wish, I wish nor want
One point o' the circle plainer, where I stand
Traced round about with white to front the world.
What of the calumny I came across,

What o' the way to the end?—the end crowns all.
The judges judged aright i' the main, gave me
The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce
From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt
With the quiet nuns,—God recompense the good!
Who said and sang away the ugly past.
And, when my final fortune was revealed,
What safety while, amid my parents' arms,
My babe was given me! Yes, he saved my babe:
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-like thing,
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble: back
Had it returned nor ever let me see!
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me live
And give my bird the life among the leaves
God meant him! Weeks and months of quietude,
I could lie in such peace and learn so much—
Begin the task, I see how needful now,
Of understanding somewhat of my past,—
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.
Therefore, because this man restored my soul,
All has been right; I have gained my gain, enjoyed
As well as suffered,—nay, got foretaste too
Of better life beginning where this ends—
All through the breathing-while allowed me thus,
Which let good premonitions reach my soul
Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow
And interpenetrate and change my heart,
Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay, unkind.
For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,
Nobody did me one disservice more,
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,
Born all in love, with naught to spoil the bliss
A whole long fortnight: in a life like mine
A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.
All women are not mothers of a boy,
Though they live twice the length of my whole life,
And, as they fancy, happily all the same.
There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,
As if it would continue, broaden out

Happily more and more, and lead to heaven:
Christmas before me,—was not that a chance?
I never realised God's birth before—
How he grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
Lying a little on my breast like hers.
So all went on till, just four days ago—
The night and the tap.

Oh it shall be success
To the whole of our poor family! My friends
. . . Nay, father and mother,—Give me back my word!
They have been rudely stripped of life, disgraced
Like children who must needs go clothed too fine,
Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent.
If they too much affected frippery,
They have been punished and submit themselves,
Say no word: all is over, they see God
Who will not be extreme to mark their fault
Or He had granted respite: they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,
I—pardon him? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.
Let him make God amends,—none, none to me
Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond: this blood of mine
Flies forth exultingly at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent? In His face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!
And as my presence was importunate,—
My earthly good, temptation and a snare,—
Nothing about me but drew somehow down

His hate upon me,—somewhat so excused
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him,—
May my evanishment for evermore
Help further to relieve the heart that cast
Such object of its natural loathing forth!
So he was made; he nowise made himself:
I could not love him, but his mother did.
His soul has never lain beside my soul:
But for the unresisting body,—thanks!
He burned that garment spotted by the flesh.
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined: plague
It caught, and disinfection it had craved
Still but for Guido; I am saved through him
So as by fire; to him—thanks and farewell!

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety thence—
From the sudden death of me, I mean: we poor
Weak souls, how we endeavor to be strong!
I was already using up my life,—
This portion, now, should do him such a good,
This other go to keep off such an ill!
The great life; see, a breath and it is gone!
So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means so much.
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand he trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; He shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearlier: if my babe
Outlived the hour—and he has lived two weeks—
It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt He will explain in time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all—

Only his mother's, born of love not hate!
So shall I have my rights in after-time.
It seems absurd, impossible to-day;
So seems so much else, not explained but known!

Ah! Friends, I thank and bless you every one!
No more now: I withdraw from earth and man
To my own soul, compose myself for God.

Well, and there is more! Yes, my end of breath
Shall bear away my soul in being true!
He is still here, not outside with the world,
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place!
'Tis now, when I am most upon the move,
I feel for what I verily find—again
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,
The heart and its immeasurable love
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,
Who put his breast between the spears and me.
Ever with Caponsacchi! Otherwise
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—
How much more loss to him, with life debarred
From giving life, love locked from love's display,
The day-star stopped its task that makes night morn!
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
No work begun shall ever pause for death:
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread—
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!
Tell him that if I seem without him now,
That's the world's insight! Oh, he understands!
He is at Civita—do I once doubt
The world again is holding us apart?
He had been here, displayed in my behalf
The broad brow that reverberates the truth,
And flashed the word God gave him, back to man!
I know where the free soul is flown! My fate
Will have been hard for even him to bear:
Let it confirm him in the trust of God,

Showing how holily he dared the deed!
And, for the rest,—say, from the deed, no touch
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,
Not one faint fleck of failure! Why explain?
What I see, oh, he sees and how much more!
Tell him,—I know not wherefore the true word
Should fade and fall unuttered at the last—
It was the name of him I sprang to meet
When came the knock, the summons and the end.
"My great heart, my strong hand are back again!"
I would have sprung to these, beckoning across
Murder and hell, gigantic and distinct
O, the threshold, posted to exclude me heaven:
He is ordained to call and I to come!
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God?
Say,—I am all in flowers from head to foot!
Say,—not one flower of all he said and did,
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown,
But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam-tree
Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place
At this supreme of moments! He is a priest;
He cannot marry therefore, which is right:
I think he would not marry if he could.
Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,
Mere imitation of the inimitable:
In heaven we have the real and true and sure.
'Tis there they neither marry nor are given
In marriage but are as the angels: right,
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ
To say that! Marriage-making for the earth,
With gold so much,—birth, power, repute so much,
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,
Know themselves into one, are found at length
Married, but marry never, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at once
When the true time is: here we have to wait
Not so long neither! Could we by a wish
Have what we will and get the future now,

Would we wish aught done undone in the past?
So, let him wait God's instant men call years;
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

# PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER

## AT THE "MERMAID"

"The figure that thou here seest . . . Tut!
Was it for gentle Shakespeare put?"

B. JONSON (*Adapted*)

I—"Next Poet?" No, my hearties,
I nor am nor fain would be!
Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
Not one soul revolt to me!
I, forsooth, sow song-sedition?
I, a schism in verse provoke?
I, blown up by bard's ambition,
Burst—your bubble-king? You joke.

Come, be grave! The sherris mantling
Still about each mouth, mayhap,
Breeds you insight—just a scantling—
Brings me truth out—just a scrap.
Look and tell me! Written, spoken,
Here's my life-long work: and where
—Where's your warrant or my token
I'm the dead king's son and heir?

Here's my work: does work discover—
What was rest from work—my life?
Did I live man's hater, lover?
Leave the world at peace, at strife?
Call earth ugliness or beauty?
See things there in large or small?
Use to pay its Lord my duty?
Use to own a lord at all?

Blank of such a record, truly
Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
Yours to take or leave; as duly,
Mine remains the unproffered soul.
So much, no whit more, my debtors—
How should one like me lay claim
To that largess elders, betters
Sell you cheap their souls for—fame?

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,
There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best,
Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
Seek and shun, respect—deride?
Who has right to make a rout of
Rarities he found inside?

Rarities or, as he'd rather,
Rubbish such as stocks his own:
Need and greed (O strange) the Father
Fashioned not for him alone!
Whence—the comfort set a-strutting,
Whence—the outcry "Haste, behold!
"Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
"Shows what brass we took for gold!"

Friends, I doubt not he'd display you
Brass—myself call orichalc,—
Furnish much amusement; pray you
Therefore, be content I balk
Him and you, and bar my portal!
Here's my work outside: opine
What's inside me mean and mortal!
Take your pleasure, leave me mine!

Which is—not to buy your laurel
As last king did, nothing loath.
Tale adorned and pointed moral
Gained him praise and pity both.

Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
Forth by scores oaths, curses flew:
Proving you were cater-cousins,
Kith and kindred, king and you!

Whereas do I ne'er so little
(Thanks to sherris) leave ajar
Bosom's gate—no jot nor tittle
Grow we nearer than we are.
Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked,—
Should I give my woes an airing,—
Where's one plague that claims respect?

Have you found your life distasteful?
My life did, and does, smack sweet.
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
Mine I saved and hold complete.
Do your joys with age diminish?
When mine fail me, I'll complain.
Must in death your daylight finish?
My sun sets to rise again.

What, like you, he proved—your Pilgrim—
This our world a wilderness,
Earth still grey and heaven still grim,
Not a hand there his might press,
Not a heart his own might throb to,
Men all rogues and women—say,
Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
Grown folk drop or throw away?

My experience being other,
How should I contribute verse
Worthy of your king and brother?
Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
I find earth not grey but rosy,
Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All's blue.

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
  Rogues and fools enough: the more
Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
  Some few honest to the core.
Scan the near high, scout the far low!
  "But the low comes close:" what then?
Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
  Sciolists? My mate is Ben.

Womankind—"the cat-like nature,
  "False and fickle, vain and weak"—
What of this sad nomenclature
  Suits my tongue, if I must speak?
Does the sex invite, repulse so,
  Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
So becalm but to convulse so,
  Decking heads and breaking hearts?

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
  I "threw Venus" (Ben, expound!)
Never did I need importune
  Her, of all the Olympian round.
Blessings on my benefactress!
  Cursings suit—for aught I know—
Those who twitched her by the back tress,
  Tugged and thought to turn her—so!

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
  Thus I'm left with,—joy or grief
Be the issue,—I abandon
  Hope or care you name me Chief!
Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
  I?—who never once have wished
Death before the day appointed:
  Lived and liked, not poohed and pished!

"Ah, but so I shall not enter,
  "Scroll in hand, the common heart—
"Stopped at surface: since at centre
  "Song should reach *Welt-schmerz,* world-smart!"

"Enter in the heart?" Its shelly
Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft!
Such song "enters in the belly
"And is cast out in the draught."

Back then to our sherris-brewage!
"Kingship" quotha? I shall wait—
Waive the present time: some new age . . .
But let fools anticipate!
Meanwhile greet me—"friend, good fellow,
"Gentle Will," my merry men!
As for making Envy yellow
With "Next Poet"—(Manners, Ben!)

## HOUSE

Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?
Do I live in a house you would like to see?
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
"Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?"

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
"Take notice: this building remains on view,
"Its suites of reception every one,
"Its private apartment and bedroom too;

"For a ticket, apply to the Publisher."
No: thanking the public, I must decline.
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced
And a house stood gaping, naught to balk
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
The inside gaped: exposed to day,
Right and wrong and common and queer,
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!
"Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
"What a parcel of musty old books about!
"He smoked,—no wonder he lost his health!

"I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
"A brasier?—the pagan, he burned perfumes!
"You see it is proved, what the neighbors guessed:
"His wife and himself had separate rooms."

Friends, the good man of the house at least
Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:
'Tis the fall of its frontage permits you feast
On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

Outside should suffice for evidence:
And whoso desires to penetrate
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—
No optics like yours, at any rate!

"Hoity-toity! A street to explore,
"Your house the exception! *'With this same key*
*"'Shakespeare unlocked his heart!'*—Once more!"
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

## SHOP

So, friend, your shop was all your house!
Its front, astonishing the street,
Invited view from man and mouse
To what diversity of treat
Behind its glass—the single sheet!

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese:
Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog;
Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese;
Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog:
Queer names, too, such a catalogue!

I thought "And he who owns the wealth
"Which blocks the window's vastitude,
"Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
"Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
"On house itself, what scenes were viewed!

"If wide and showy thus the shop,
"What must the habitation prove?
"The true house with no name a-top—
"The mansion, distant one remove,
"Once get him off his traffic-groove!

"Pictures he likes, or books perhaps;
"And as for buying most and best,
"Commend me to these City chaps!
"Or else he's social, takes his rest
"On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

"Some suburb-palace, parked about
"And grated grandly, built last year:
"The four-mile walk to keep off gout;
"Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer:
"But then he takes the rail, that's clear.

"Or, stop! I wager, taste selects
'Some out-o'-the-way, some all-unknown
"Retreat: the neighborhood suspects
"Little that he who rambles lone
"Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne!"

Nowise! Nor Mayfair residence
Fit to receive and entertain,—
Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
From noise and crowd, from dust and drain,—
Nor country-box was soul's domain!

Nowise! At back of all that spread
Of merchandise, woe's me, I find
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
The owner couched, his ware behind,
—In cupboard suited to his mind.

For why? He saw no use of life
But, while he drove a roaring trade,
To chuckle "Customers are rife!"
To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
"Yet zero in my profits made!

"This novelty costs pains, but—takes?
"Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!
"This article, no such great shakes,
"Fizzes like wildfire? Underscore
"The cheap thing—thousands to the fore!"

'Twas lodging best to live most nigh
(Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
Wanted no outworld: "Hear and see
"The bustle in the shop!" quoth he.

My fancy of a merchant-prince
Was different. Through his wares we groped
Our darkling way to—not to mince
The matter—no black den where moped
The master if we interloped!

Shop was shop only: household-stuff?
What did he want with comforts there?
"Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
"So goods on sale show rich and rare!
"'*Sell and scud home*' be shop's affair!"

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose!
Since somehow business must be done
At cost of trouble,—see, he throws
You choice of jewels, everyone,
Good, better, best, star, moon and sun!

Which lies within your power of purse?
This ruby that would tip aright
Solomon's sceptre? Oh, your nurse
Wants simply coral, the delight
Of teething baby,—stuff to bite!

Howe'er your choice fell, straight you took
Your purchase, prompt your money rang
On counter,—scarce the man forsook
His study of the "Times," just swang
Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang,—

Then off made buyer with a prize,
Then seller to his "Times" returned;
And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
Brightened apace, for rest was earned:
He locked door long ere candle burned.

And whither went he? Ask himself,
Not me! To change of scene, I think.
Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
Nor all his music—money-chink.

Because a man has shop to mind
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give?

I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
Candle-stick maker much acquaints
His soul with song, or, haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute!

But—shop each day and all day long!
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be—Christ, how far!

## HERVÉ RIEL

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase:
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
"Help the winners of a race!
"Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick—or, quicker still,
"Here's the English can and will!"

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
"Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?" laughed they:
"Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,
"Shall the 'Formidable' here with her twelve and eighty guns
"Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
"Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
"And with flow at full beside?
"Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
"Reach the mooring? Rather say,
"While rock stands or water runs,
"Not a ship will leave the bay!"

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
"All that's left us of the fleet linked together stern and bow,
"For a prize to Plymouth Sound?
"Better run the ships aground!"
(Ended Damfreville his speech).
"Not a minute more to wait!
"Let the Captains all and each
"Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
"France must undergo her fate.

"Give the word!" But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
—A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate—first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simplet Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

And "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?
"Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
"On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
"'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disembogues?
"Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's for?
"Morn and eve, night and day,
"Have I piloted your bay,

"Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
"Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!
"Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there's a way!
"Only let me lead the line,
"Have the biggest ship to steer,
"Get this 'Formidable' clear,
"Make the others follow mine,
"And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,
"Right to Solidor past Grève,
"And there lay them safe and sound;
"And if one ship misbehave,
"—Keel so much as grate the ground,
"Why, I've nothing but my life,—here's my head!" cries Hervé Riel.

Not a minute more to wait.
"Steer us in, then, small and great!
"Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!" cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace!
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!
See, safe through shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past,
All are harbored to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as fate,
Up the English come—too late!

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the height o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
"Just our rapture to enhance,
"Let the English rake the bay,
"Gnash their teeth and glare askance
"As they cannonade away!
"'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
"This is Paradise for Hell!
"Let France, let France's King
"Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
"I must speak out at the end,
"Though I find the speaking hard.
"Praise is deeper than the lips:
"You have saved the King his ships.
"You must name your own reward.
"Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
"Demand whate'er you will,
"France remains your debtor still.
"Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville."

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
"Since on board the duty's done,
"And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run?—

"Since 'tis ask and have, I may—
"Since the others go ashore—
"Come! A good whole holiday!
"Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.
Go to Paris: rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the Belle Aurore!

# DRAMATIC IDYLS

## CLIVE

I and Clive were friends—and why not?
Friends! I think you laugh, my lad.
Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives—egad,
England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to speak—
"Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades—" with a tongue thrust in your cheek!
Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive was man,
I was, am and ever shall be—mouse, nay, mouse of all its clan
Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;
While the man Clive—he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever foreign game,
Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch
(You away) I sit of evenings,—silence, save for biscuit-crunch,
Black, unbroken,—thought grows busy, thrids each pathway of old years,
Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long-past life appears
Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile and rood,
Once, and well remembered still: I'm startled in my solitude
Ever and anon by—what's the sudden mocking light that breaks
On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes

While I ask—aloud, I do believe, God help me!—"Was it thus?
"Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us—"
(Us,—you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born would be)
"—One bold step had gained a province" (figurative talk, you see)
"Got no end of wealth and honor,—yet I stood stock still no less?"
—"For I was not Clive," you comment: but it needs no Clive to guess
Wealth were handy, honor ticklish, did no writing on the wall
Warn me "Trespasser, 'ware man-traps!" Him who braves that notice—call
Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says the land's the Lord's:
Louts then—what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked ring,
All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
T'other in that dark direction, though I stand for evermore
Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By-and-by
Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.
Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power is power, my boy, and still
Marks a man,—God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a tiger's skin:
Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!
True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage—ah, the brute he was!

Why, that Clive,—that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-
driving clerk, in fine,—
He sustained a siege in Arcot. . . . But the world knows!
Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh, you
mentioned "fear"!
Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds,
about the orb
Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to
absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance,—friendship might, with
steadier eye
Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze—
all majesty.
Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a
castle's new:
None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold
sure for shoe
'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the
impervious pile
As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.
Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From
without
Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates
about
Towers—the heap he kicks now! turrets—just the measure
of his cane!
Will that do? Observe moreover—(same similitude
again)—
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:
'Tis when foes are foiled and fighting's finished that vile
rains invade,
Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregating find
no holes
Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for banner-
poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London—crashed at last.

A week before,
Dining with him,—after trying churchyard-chat of days of yore,—
Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece, foot-piece, when they lean
Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined Past between.
As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extinguishment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor,—"One more throw
"Try for Clive!" thought I: "Let's venture some good rattling question!" So—
"Come, Clive, tell us"—out I blurted—"what to tell in turn, years hence,
"When my boy—suppose I have one—asks me on what evidence
"I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every whit
"Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs and—what said Pitt?—
"Frederick the Fierce himself! 'Clive told me once'—I want to say—
" 'Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell away
" '—In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's rough guess—
" 'Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called courageousness!'
"Come! what moment of the minute, what speck-centre in the wide
"Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified?
"(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this wholesome Port!)
"If a friend has leave to question,—when were you most brave, in short?"

Up he arched his brows o' the instant—formidably Clive again.
"When was I most brave? I'd answer, were the instance half as plain

"As another instance that's a brain-lodged crystal—curse it!
—here
"Freezing when my memory touches—ugh!—the time I felt
most fear.
"Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear—anyhow,
"Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver now."

"Fear!" smiled I. 'Well, that's the rarer: that's a speci-
men to seek,
"Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive's
Fear, Unique!*"

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he pored
as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts encrusted
long ago.
When he spoke 'twas like a lawyer reading word by word
some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement,—beating on and on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

"This fell in my factor-days.
"Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one must game, or
drink, or craze.
"I chose gaming: and,—because your high-flown gamesters
hardly take
"Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor pays his stake,—
"I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
"Captain This and Major That, men high of color, loud
of voice,
"Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile
"Who not merely risked but lost his hard-earned guineas
with a smile.

"Down I sat to cards, one evening,—had for my antagonist
"Somebody whose name's a secret—you'll know why—so, if
you list,
"Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars from
head to heel!
"Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a clerk
must feel

"Quite sufficient honor came of bending over one green baize,
"I the scribe with him the warrior,—guessed no penman dared to raise
"Shadows of objection should the honor stay but playing end
"More or less abruptly,—whether disinclined he grew to spend
"Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
"At—not ask of—lace-and-ruffles if the hand they hide plays fair,—
"Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me 'Cut!'

"I rose.
" 'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I'm a novice: knowledge grows.
" 'What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'

"Never did a thunder-clap
"Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in his lap,
"As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to join the pack)
"Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red before, turned black.

"When he found his voice, he stammered 'That expression once again.'

" 'Well, you forced a card and cheated!'

" 'Possibly a factor's brain,
" 'Busied with his all-important balance of accounts, may deem
" 'Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may seem
" 'Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you see!
" 'When a gentleman is joked with,—if he's good at repartee,

" 'He rejoins, as do I—Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
" 'Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
" 'Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose quick—
" 'Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon candle-wick!'

" 'Well, you cheated.'

"Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
"To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth were ground.
" 'End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our disgrace!
" 'No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a space!
" 'Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
" 'Fly the sword! This clerk's no swordsman? Suit him with a pistol, then!
" 'Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most and least expert
" 'Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the dwarf, if he's alert,
" 'Likelier hits the broader target!'

"Up we stood accordingly.
"As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul's thirst to try
"Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp out
"Every spark of his existence, that,—crept close to, curled about
"By that toying tempting teasing fool-forefinger's middle joint,—
"Don't you guess?—the trigger yielded. Gone my chance! and at the point
"Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above his head
"Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was dead.

"Up he marched in flaming triumph—'twas his right, mind!
—up, within
"Just an arm's length. 'Now, my clerkling,' chuckled Cocky
with a grin
"As the levelled piece quite touched me, 'Now, Sir Counting-
House, repeat
" 'That expression which I told you proved bad manners!
Did I cheat?'

" 'Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this moment,
know as well.
" 'As for me, my homely breeding bids you—fire and go to
Hell!'

"Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel,
flurried wrist,
"Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, 'Laugh at
Hell who list,
" 'I can't! God's no fable either. Did this boy's eye wink
once? No!
" 'There's no standing him and Hell and God all three
against me,—so,
" 'I did cheat!'
"And down he threw the pistol, out rushed—by the door
"Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or floor,
"He effected disappearance—I'll engage no glance was sent
"That way by a single starer, such a blank astonishment
"Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking—mute they
stood as mice.

"Mute not long though! Such reaction, such a hubbub
in a trice!
" 'Rogue and rascal! Who'd have thought it? What's to
be expected next,
" 'When His Majesty's Commission serves a sharper as pre-
text
" 'For . . . But where's the need of wasting time now?
Nought requires delay:
" 'Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped
away

" 'Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No, indeed
" 'Drum and fife must play the Rogue's March, rank and file be free to speed
" 'Tardy marching on the rogue's part by appliance in the rear
"—'Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian,—never fear,
" 'Mister Clive, for—though a clerk—you bore yourself—suppose we say—
" 'Just as would beseem a soldier!'

" 'Gentlemen, attention—pray!
" 'First, one word!'

"I passed each speaker severally in review.
"When I had precise their number, names and styles, and fully knew
"Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend,—why, then——

" 'Some five minutes since, my life lay as you all saw, gentlemen—
" 'At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice was raised
" 'In arrest of judgment, not one tongue—before my powder blazed—
" 'Ventured "Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to mark
" ' "Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,
" ' "Guess at random,—still, for sake of fair play—what if for a freak,
" ' "In a fit of absence,—such things have been!—if our friend proved weak
" ' "—What's the phrase?—corrected fortune! Look into the case at least!"
" 'Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and the priest?
" 'Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or each,
" 'To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters speech

"'—To his face, behind his back,—that speaker has to do with me:
"'Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should be,
"'Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!'

"Twenty-five
"Years ago this matter happened: and 'tis certain," added Clive,
"Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath
"Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life, or since his death,
"For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.
"All I know is—Cocky had one chance more; how he used it,—grew
"Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again
"Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train,—
"That's for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any rate.
"Ugh—the memory of that minute's fear makes gooseflesh rise! Why prate
"Longer? You've my story, there's your instance: fear I did, you see!"

"Well"—I hardly kept from laughing—"if I see it, thanks must be
"Wholly to your Lordship's candor. Not that—in a common case—
"When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
"I should underrate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
"'Tis no joke at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.
"Fear I naturally look for—unless, of all men alive,
"I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
"Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death—the whole world knows—
"Came to somewhat closer quarters."

Quarters? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered—up he sprang so, out he rapped
Such a round of oaths—no matter! I'll endeavor to adapt
To our modern usage words he—well, 'twas friendly licence —flung
At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

"You—a soldier? You—at Plassy? Yours the faculty to nick
"Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
"—At his mercy, at his malice,—has you, through some stupid inch
"Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open,—not to flinch
"—That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,
"Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
"Distant from my temple,—curse him!—quietly had bade me 'There!
" 'Keep your life, calumniator!—worthless life I freely spare:
" 'Mine you freely would have taken—murdered me and my good fame
" 'Both at once—and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
" 'Which permits me to forgive you!' What if, with such words as these,
"He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
"Nay, I'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained—
"Pick his weapon up and use it on myself, I so had gained
"Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
"Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will."

"Such the turn," said I, "the matter takes with you? Then I abate
"—No, by not one jot nor tittle,—of your act my estimate.

"Fear—I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain enough—
"Call it desperation, madness—never mind! for here's in rough
"Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.
"True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God's face
"—None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
"Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign climes
"Rub some marks away—not all, though! We poor sinners reach life's brink,
"Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think
"There's advantage in what's left us—ground to stand on, time to call
" 'Lord, have mercy!' ere we topple over—do not leap, that's all!"
Oh, he made no answer,—re-absorbed into his cloud. I caught
Something like "Yes—courage: only fools will call it fear."

If aught
Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,
Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered just the word
"Fearfully courageous!"—this, be sure, and nothing else I groaned.
I'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's worst deed—we'll hope condoned.

## MULÉYKEH

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "A churl's!"
Or haply "God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!"
—"Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he needs not pity nor scorn

"More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking pearls,
"—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
"On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?
"They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the due,
"Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
"God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,
" 'Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
" 'And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and gold!'

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn—and right, I say.
"Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
"Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
"Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that day.
" 'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we used to call
"Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyn, I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies: "Be sure
"On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
"On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
"For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.
"A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
" 'For the vulgar—flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize apart.' "

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's tent,
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace!" bids he.
"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the wrong.

"'Tis said of your Pearl—the price of a hundred camels spent
"In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from me
"Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too long."

Said Hóseyn, "You feed young beasts a many, of famous breed,
"Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:
"There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the hill.
"But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
"Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels—go gaze on them!
"Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
"You are open-hearted, ay—moist-handed, a very prince.
"Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!
"My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife prompts 'Fool,
" 'Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since
" 'God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on him shows thrift.' "

Said Hóseyn, "God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then gives
"That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted—hold high, wave wide
"Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is left?
"The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Muléykeh lives.
"Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?
"It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft?"

Another year and—hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the trench

Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber—and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the wrench.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
"And a jibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
"Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!
"He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode: nay, more,—
"For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
"I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
"Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
"And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:
"Let him die, then,—let me live! Be bold—but not too rash!
"I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing while
"I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not, the spy!

"As he said—there lies in peace Hóseyn—how happy! Beside
"Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her head-stall about his wrist:
" 'Tis therefore he sleeps so sound—the moon through the roof reveals.
"And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
"Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
"The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case some thief
"Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.
"What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both escape."
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl,—so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as before,
He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth we know!

And Hóseyn—his blood turns flame, he has learned long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part,—they gain—they are gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán,—no safety till that be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope—beat sister she shall and must,
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.

She is near now, nose by tail—they are neck by croup—joy! fear!
What folly makes Hóseyn shout "Dog Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
"Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's left flank!"

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished forevermore.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his grief;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is crazed past hope!
"How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?
"To have simply held the tongue were a task for boy or girl,
"And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
"The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night!"—
"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn. "You never have loved my Pearl."

# JOCOSERIA

## WANTING IS—WHAT?

Wanting is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame?
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with naught they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

## NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

Never the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path—how soft to pace!
This May—what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,

With a malice that marks each word, each sign!
O enemy sly and serpentine,
Uncoil thee from the waking man!
Do I hold the Past
Thus firm and fast
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?
This path so soft to pace shall lead
Through the magic of May to herself indeed!
Or narrow if needs the house must be,
Outside are the storms and strangers: we—
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
—I and she!

# WHY I AM A LIBERAL

## WHY I AM A LIBERAL

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men—each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly, too?
But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

# ASOLANDO

## SUMMUM BONUM

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how far above them—
Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

## A PEARL, A GIRL

A simple ring with a single stone
To the vulgar eye no stone of price:
Whisper the right word, that alone—
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('tis I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise
Utter the true word—out and away
Escapes her soul: I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth—
Through the love in a girl!

## REPHAN

Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Norwich.—R. B.

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours,—like you, made man,—
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt
Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek—

Diseased in the body, sick in soul
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth,—your whole
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

Let drive the sail, dare unconfined
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all's at most—not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want—whatever should be, is now:
No growth—that's change, and change comes—how
To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins—so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

I use your language: mine—no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What—in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things
Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

All happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that's checked or grows
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose—

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around—rose-red:
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I—would prove I lacked
Somewhat: one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked?—

Till out of its peace at length grew strife—
Hopes, fears, loves, hates,—obscurely rife,—
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life?

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar—unmake the disc—
Spoil rondure: what in it ran brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread
Till, fresh-formed, faceted, floreted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead?

No mimic of Star Rephan! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me—height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
Supremacy ever—to move, remove,

Not reach—aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain,—
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance,—just for this—
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonise, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not rest?

"Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
"Not rest content with a wealth that's dearth?
"Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!"

## DEVELOPMENT

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
"What do you read about?"
"The siege of Troy."
"What is a siege, and what is Troy?"
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close

Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom—since she was worth the pains, poor puss—
Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai,—sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance
And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who and what was what:
So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old; a huge delight it proved
And still proves—thanks to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That—I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege—
My Father came upon our make-believe.
"How would you like to read yourself the tale
"Properly told, of which I gave you first
"Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
"Pope, now, would give you the precise account
"Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
"You'll hear—who knows?—from Homer's very mouth.
"Learn Greek by all means, rêad the 'Blind Old Man,
"Sweetest of Singers'—*tuphlos* which means 'blind,'
"*Hedistos* which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!
"Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
"Until when, take what serves for substitute,
"Read Pope, by all means!"
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale—what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next—
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn—say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
"There's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:

"Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"
I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,
And there an end of learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,
"Who was it wrote the Iliad?"—what a laugh!
"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
"Doubtless some facts exist: it's everywhere:
"We have not settled, though, his place of birth:
"He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
"Seven cities claimed him—Scio, with best right,
"Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
"Then there's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'
"That's all—unless they dig 'Margites' up
"(I'd like that) nothing more remains to know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until—"What's this the Germans say in fact
"That Wolf found out first? It's unpleasant work
"Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:
"All the same, where we live, we learn, that's sure."
So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena.*
And after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged,—nay, worse,—
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long—
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward—thank my stars!—
However it got there, deprive who could—
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend?—though Wolf—ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?
But then, "No dream's worth waking"—Browning says:
And here's the reason why I tell thus much.

I, now mature man, you anticipate,
May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified
To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have—somehow—correspondingly—
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is—he might have put into my hand
The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less—
The "Ethics": 'tis a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is grey,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old—how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogs-ear and deface—boys' way.

## EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you—whom you loved so,
Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry 'Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

# NOTES

Page 4. **Pippa Passes.**—The germ of *Pippa Passes* was the idea of a person passing through life alone and influencing others unwittingly by virtue of sheer innocence and joy. This happy conception came suddenly to Browning while he was walking alone in a wood in Dulwich. He gave the idea a local setting at Asolo, a little town about thirty miles northeast of Venice, enriched it with the associations and scenery of this place, and published the poem in the first number of *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1841.

Page 20. **Canova's women.**—The sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822) was born at Possagno, near Asolo. Near the end of his life he formed the project of a temple in the classical style at Possagno. In the conversation of the students preceding Part II, two of Canova's works are mentioned—the *Psiche-fanciulla* (Psyche as a Girl) and the *Pietà.*

Page 21. **Alciphron.**—A Greek writer of the Second Century, A. D., author of a series of letters representing the lives of various social classes in Greece.

Page 24. **Bessarion's scribe.**—Cardinal Bessarion (1395 ?-1472), a famous ecclesiastic and scholar, discovered the manuscript of a poem by Coluthus on the rape of Helen.

Page 29. **Give her but the least excuse to love me!**—This song is based on a legend concerning Catherine Cornaro (1454-1510), who was for a number of years Queen of Cyprus. After her deposition she received the town and castle of Asolo, where she maintained a court to the end of her life.

Page 32. **Celarent, Darii, Ferio.**—Mnemonic names for moods of the first figure of the syllogism. Any other sonorous words would have served Bluphock's turn as well.

Page 33. **the Carbonari.**—A secret political society formed in the Kingdom of Naples in the period of Napoleonic occupation.

**Spielberg.**—A political prison, near Brünn, in Moravia.

Page 34. **"Lucius Junius."**—Lucius Junius Brutus, one of the assassins of Julius Cæsar.

**old Franz.**—Francis I. of Austria (1768-1835).

**Your Pellico's and writers for effect.**—Silvio Pellico (1788-1854), a revolutionary writer. His *Le mie prigioni* (My Prisons) is an account of his experiences as a political prisoner.

Page 52. **Cavalier Tunes.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842.

**Hazelrig.**—Sir Arthur Hazelrig, one of the Parliamentary enemies of Charles I. See Browning's *Strafford,* Act IV, sc. ii.

**Fiennes.**—Nathaniel Fiennes, a Presbyterian member of the Commons.

**Young Harry.**—*Sir Henry Vane,* the younger, a Parliamentary leader in the Civil War.

**Rupert.**—Prince Rupert (1619-1682), the brilliant Royalist cavalry commander in the Civil War of the Seventeenth Century.

Page 53. **Noll's damned troopers.**—Oliver Cromwell's.

Page 54. **The Lost Leader.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. VII, 1845. Browning confessed that in his "hasty youth" he had used "the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model" for some traits of the political renegade as represented in this poem. Even in his youth Browning recognized the injustice of accusing Wordsworth of accepting bribes. His poem is not biographical.

Page 55. **"How They Brought the Good News from Ghent**

**to Aix.''**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. VII, 1845. This poem was written on board the ship Norham Castle, off the coast of Africa, during the author's first journey to Italy in 1838. The narrative is without historical foundation. It was inspired by the fact that Browning had been at sea long enough to feel the attraction of a brisk ride on horseback.

Page 57. **Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.**—First published, as a companion-poem to "Incident of the French Camp," in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842.

Page 58. **In three sips the Arian frustrate.**—An Arian was a follower of Arius, an Alexandrian heretic of the Fourth Century, who held that the Son is not of equal rank with the Father, but subordinate to Him.

**A great text in Galatians.**—Probably Galatians iii. 10, which seems to invoke on the evil-doer all the curses indicated in Deuteronomy xxviii. 15-68.

**A Manichee.**—A follower of Mani, or Manes, a Persian theologian of the Third Century who attempted to combine the teachings of Zoroaster with those of Christ.

Page 69. **A Toccata of Galuppi's.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Baldassaro Galuppi (1706-1785) was the composer of a great number of operas. He was a choir-master of Saint Mark's, Venice. The toccata (from *toccare,* to touch) is a prelude, or touch-piece.

Page 72. **Old Pictures in Florence.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

**The startling bell-tower Giotto raised.**—The famous Campanile in Florence. Giotto di Bondone (1276-1337) also designed the façade of the Duomo and painted many frescoes in Florence and Padua.

Page 73. **DaVincis derive in good time from Dellos.**—Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was the great Italian painter, sculptor, musician, scientist, and writer. His best-known pictures are the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper." Niccolo Dello was a painter and sculptor of the early Fifteenth Cen-

tury. He decorated *cassoni* (chests and coffers) for the Medici and other noble families.

**Stefano there . . . Called Nature's ape and the world's despair.**—In the opinion of Vasari, Stefano far surpassed Giotto in painting. His success in dealing with the foreshortening of the limbs and trunk gained him the title "the ape of nature."

**(See Vasari).**—George Vasari (1511-1574). Author of the *Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Sculptors, and Painters* (1550).

Page 75. **Thy one work . . . was just (was it not?) "O!"** —At the demand of a messenger of Pope Benedict XI for a specimen of his skill, Giotto drew a perfect circle, free-hand, with a single sweep of his brush.

Page 76. **Nicolo the Pisan.**—An architect and sculptor of the Thirteenth Century.

**My painter—who but Cimabue?**—Giovanni Cimabue (1240-1302), the teacher of Giotto and the reformer of Italian art.

Page 77. **Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo.**—Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), sculptor of the bronze gates of the Baptistery in Florence; Domenico Ghirlandajo (1449-1494), a Florentine painter. Bigordi is his family name.

**Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose.**—Sandro Botticelli (1447-1515), a Florentine painter.

**The wronged Lippino.**—Filippo Lippi (1460-1505), the son of Fra Lippo Lippi—wronged in reputation by the assignment of some of his pictures to other painters.

**Fra Angelico.**—Fra Giovanni Angelico of Fiesole (1387-1455), a Dominican monk of saintly life, and an idealistic religious painter.

**Taddeo Gaddi.**—A Florentine painter and architect, one of Giotto's assistants (1300-1366).

**Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?**—A monk of the Camaldolose order and a painter of Florence.

Page 78. **Some clay-cold vile Carlino.**—Carlo Dolce, or Carlino (1616-1686), a Florentine religious painter.

Page 79. **Hunting Radetzky's soul.**—Count Joseph Wenzel Radetsky, Austrian field-marshal, and governor of Upper Italy from 1849 to 1858.

**(Ex: "Casa Guidi," quod videas ante).**—The reference is to Mrs. Browning's poem on the liberation of Italy, "Casa Guidi Windows," which is named from the house occupied by the Brownings in Florence. Part I (sections xii-xv) contains an account of the street procession and demonstration at the stone of Dante.

**Go, hated house, go, each trace of the Loraine's.**—The house of Lorraine, or Hapsburg-Lorraine. The emperors of Austria and oppressors of northern Italy belonged to this dynasty

**And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!**—Andrea Orcagna was a Florentine painter of the Fourteenth Century.

**The half-told tale of Cambuscan.**—Chaucer's *Squire's Tale,* left unfinished.

Page 82. **Saul.**—The first nine sections of "Saul" were first published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. VII, 1845. The poem first appeared in its complete form in *Men and Women,* 1855. The foundation of the narrative is the account of David's harping before Saul in I Samuel xvi. 14-23.

Mrs. Browning's comments on "Saul" and her suggestions for its improvement may be found in *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (The Macmillan Company, 1925), pp. 1325-1327. Most of these suggestions were adopted—very wisely. For example, the lines containing a description of a dry river-bed, in section ix, were originally written—

> And the sleep in the dried river-channel
> Where bulrushes tell
> That the water was wont to go warbling
> Softly and well.

Mrs. Browning asked: "Is not a syllable wanted at the be-

ginning of the [second] short line, to make the water warble softly . . . *right softly?*"

Another suggestion was that the lines—

> Then a sunbeam burst thro' the blind tent-roof
> Showed Saul—

"be rendered more rapid by the removal of the clogging epithet 'blind' . . . What if you tried the line thus—

> Then a sunbeam that burst thro' the tent-roof
> Showed Saul?"

Page 96. **From thy will stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth.**—Sabaoth, a Hebrew plural meaning "hosts," as in the phrase "Lord of Hosts."

Page 98. **My Star.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

**(Like the angled spar).**—Iceland spar has the property of polarising light.

Page 99. **By the Fireside.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. The scene of the declaration is a gorge near the Baths of Lucca, where the Brownings spent parts of the summers of 1847 and 1853.

Page 106. **That great brow**
**And the spirit-small hand propping it.**—The features and posture are those of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Page 111. **Respectability.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

**Guizot receives Montalembert.**—François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787-1874), French statesman and author; Conte de Montalembert (1810-1870), French historian and politician.

Page 116. **The Guardian-Angel.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Suggested by the picture by Guercino in the church of Saint Augustine at Fano.

Page 121. **A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1843.

This play was written for Macready, accepted by him in 1841, and acted by his company in 1843. Macready had criticised Browning's two earlier plays, *King Victor and King Charles* and *The Return of the Druses* as being better adapted to the study than to the stage. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* is a response to this criticism. Browning described the play as, in a measure, a compromise between his own ideas and those of Macready.

Its production led to a violent quarrel and a long estrangement between Macready and the author. Both sides of this affair are accurately presented by Messrs. Hall and Griffin in *The Life of Robert Browning* (Macmillan, 1910). Mr. Chesterton attributes the incident to Browning's failure to divine Macready's unwillingness to play the leading part as had been agreed. Browning was too frank and direct a character to understand the actor's subterfuges.

The play was moderately successful, despite hisses that expressed the audience's disapproval of some improbable incidents, notably that of Mertoun's singing as he climbed to Mildred's window.

Page 165. **Incident of the French Camp.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842.

**we French stormed Ratisbon.**—Ratisbon: Regensburg in Bavaria. The storming took place in 1809. The poem is based on fact, except that the author has substituted a boy for a man as the hero.

Page 168. **The Italian in England.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. VII, 1845.

Page 169. **Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked.**—Charles, Carlo Alberto (1798-1849), King of Sardinia, a leader of the national movement in Italy. He was defeated by the Austrians and abdicated in 1849.

**Metternich.**—Prince Metternich (1773-1859), leader of reaction in Europe between Waterloo and 1848, and consequently opposed to the liberation of Italy. He appears as an important character in E. Rostand's *L'Aiglon.*

Page 173. **In a Gondola.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842. This poem was suggested by a picture by the Irish historical painter, Daniel Maclise.

Page 179. **Waring.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842. The subject is Alfred Domett, a friend of Browning's boyhood in Camberwell. Domett emigrated to New Zealand and became prime-minister of the colony. Browning addresses him in "The Guardian-Angel."

Page 181. **Past our reach.**—Perhaps the true reading should be—

> Past our reach; and in, the flowers
> Shut her unregarded hours.

Page 183. **Caldara Polidore.**—A painter of friezes and a pupil of Raphael.

**Purcell.**—Henry Purcell (1658-1695), English musician.

Page 189. **The Pied Piper of Hamelin.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. III, 1842.

Page 197. **A Grammarian's Funeral.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

Page 201. **He settled Hoti's business.**—The Grammarian made the most abstruse studies for establishing the rules pertaining to the use of Greek particles, ὅτι, οὖν, δε

Page 201. **Holy-Cross Day.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Browning wrote, as an introduction to this poem, the fictitious entry in a diary, supposed to have been kept by the Bishop's secretary (1600).

Page 215. **"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came."**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. The poem was suggested by Edgar's song in *Lear,* an old horse in the tapestry of a room occupied by Browning in Florence, and a tower seen in the Carrara mountains. The author confirmed a general interpretation made by a friend: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Page 225. **An Epistle from Karshish.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

Page 226. **Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.**—This reference makes it possible to date the action of the poem

as just before the siege of Jerusalem, 70 A. D. Vespasian, who had been conducting the war against the Jews, upon being proclaimed emperor, had returned to Rome in 69. He left his son Titus to finish the war.

Page 235. **Fra Lippo Lippi.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Fra Lippo Lippi (1402?-1469), a Florentine monk and painter.

Page 242. **His name is Guidi.**—Tommaso Guidi (1401-1428), a Florentine painter.

Page 244. **I shall paint.**—The monk describes one of his actual pictures—the *Coronation of the Virgin.*

Page 245. **Andrea del Sarto.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Mrs. Andrew Crosse writes the following account of the origin of this poem, in an article entitled *John Kenyon and His Friends:* "When the Brownings were living in Florence, Kenyon had begged them to procure for him a copy of the portrait in the Pitti of Andrea del Sarto and his wife. Mr. Browning was unable to get the copy made with any promise of satisfaction, and so wrote the exquisite poem of Andrea del Sarto—and sent it to Kenyon!" (Quoted by Edward Dowden, *Robert Browning,* p. 191.)

Page 248. **The Urbinate who died five years ago.**—Raphael, who was born at Urbino. The reference makes it possible to date the action of the poem in 1525.

Page 252. **The Bishop Orders His Tomb.**—First published in *Bells and Pomegranates,* No. VII, 1845. Ruskin commented with enthusiasm and generosity on the historical value of this poem. He declared that it contained more significant truths about the Renaissance—its hypocrisy, vice, luxury, worldliness—than Ruskin himself had been able to put into thirty pages of his *Stones of Venice.*

Page 254. **Ulpian serves his need.**—Ulpian's Latin was that of the decline of the Roman Empire. The Bishop scorns *elucescebat* as debased Latin, not to be found in Cicero.

Page 255. **Bishop Blougram's Apology.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855. Browning admitted that he used

Cardinal Wiseman, the famous English Roman Catholic prelate (*"in partibus Episcopus"*), as the model for Blougram. Wilfrid Ward, the Roman Catholic essayist, asserts that the poem is a faithful likeness of the Cardinal in all respects except theology. The wit, taste, scholarship, love of travel, force, and leadership are authentic traits of Wiseman, but not the skepticism concerning important tenets of the Church.

Page 257. **Count D'Orsay.**—A famous French dandy (1798-1852).

Page 265. **Like Verdi.**—Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), composer of *Rigoletto, Il Trovatore, La Traviata, Otello,* and many other operas.

**Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.**—Gioachimo Antonio Rossini (1792-1868), composer of *William Tell, Stabat Mater, The Barber of Seville,* etc.

Page 266. **The . . . demirep**
**That loves and saves her soul in new French books.**
—The reference is apparently to *La Dame aux Camélias,* by the younger Dumas (published 1852). In the first book of *The Ring and the Book* Browning speaks contemptuously of this novel—

"the fond tale
O' the Frail One of the Flower, by young Dumas."

Page 269. **Giulio Romano's pictures.**—Giulio Romano (1492-1546), a pupil of Raphael. Shakespeare mentions him in *The Winter's Tale.*

**Dowland's lute.**—John Dowland (1563-1626), English lutenist and composer. A sonnet to Dowland by Richard Barnfield has sometimes been attributed to Shakespeare. (Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians.* Philadelphia, 1925, Vol. i, p. 725.)

**"Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."**—Cardinal Pandulph makes a ceremonial entrance in Shakespeare's *King John,* III. i.

Page 271. **As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.**
—David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), author of a *Life of*

*Jesus,* in which he treated the narratives of the Gospels skeptically.

Page 274. **brother Newman.**—John Henry Newman (1801-1890), English Roman Catholic prelate, one of the leaders of the Oxford movement, author of *A Grammar of Assent, Apologia pro Vita,* etc.

**King Bomba's lazzaroni.**—Bomba: Ferdinand II (1810-1859), King of the Two Sicilies. He suppressed a rising against him in 1849 by bombardment of the cities. This gained him the epithet "Bomba."

**So, Antonelli writes.**—Giacomo Antonelli (1806-1876), secretary of foreign affairs for the Papal States.

**The Naples liquefaction.**—The miraculous liquefaction of the congealed blood of St. Januarius, supposed to have taken place at Naples on the saint's festival.

Page 275. **Fichte's clever cut at God himself.**—Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), the great German philosopher.

Page 280. **A statesman with a scheme to stop this war.**—The Crimean War was in progress when *Blougram* was being written.

Page 282. **Cleon.**—First published in *Men and Women,* 1855.

**"As certain also of your own poets have said."**—This clause occurs in Paul's address to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28.

Page 291. **Rudel.**—Rudel was a 12th century troubadour who fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, although he had never seen her.

Page 292. **One Word More.**—First published as the dedication of *Men and Women,* 1855.

Page 299. **Abt Vogler.**—First published in *Dramatis Personæ,* 1864. The Abbé Vogler (1749-1814), German musician, composer, and teacher of music. The "musical instrument of his

invention" was the orchestrion, on which he played a concert in London, 1790.

**The ineffable name.**—The name of the Deity, unlawful for Hebrews to speak.

Page 303. **Rabbi Ben Ezra.**—First published in *Dramatis Personæ,* 1864. Ibn Ezra (1119-1168?), a Jewish scholar of Toledo, author of a series of Commentaries on the Old Testament.

Page 309. **A Death in the Desert.**—First published in *Dramatis Personæ,* 1864. The time of the poem is that of a persecution of Christians, perhaps the persecution in the reign of Domitian. The poem was probably suggested to Browning by the publication of Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863).

Page 311. **This is the doctrine he was wont to teach.**—The doctrine is a mystical, Neo-Platonic conception of human personality.

Page 327. **Caliban upon Setebos.**—First published in *Dramatis Personæ,* 1863.

**"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."**—Psalm l. 21.

**Caliban:** the servant-monster in Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* E. Renan has based a satirical social drama on the same character.

Page 337. **Prospice.**—First published in *The Atlantic Monthly,* June, 1864. Written in the autumn of 1861, a few months after the death of Mrs. Browning.

Page 340. **Apparent Failure.**—First published in *Dramatis Personæ,* 1864.

Page 341. **The Congress.**—The Congress in Paris for the settlement after the Crimean War. Russia was represented by Prince Gortschakoff, Austria by Buol-Schauenstein, and Sardinia by Cavour.

**Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue.**—Petrarch

was born at Vaucluse; the river Sorgue rises in the valley of Vaucluse.

Page 343. **The Ring and the Book.**—One day in June, 1860, Browning found in the Piazza San Lorenzo, Florence, in a market for old-clothes, second-hand furniture, and the like, an old, worn, vellum-bound book. This volume, "part print, part manuscript," proved to be the record of a murder trial that took place in Rome at the close of the Seventeenth Century. On this *The Ring and the Book* is based. The Old Yellow Book (as it is called) has been edited, with translations, notes, and an elaborate comparison with Browning's poem, by Professor C. W. Hodell (*The Old Yellow Book,* Carnegie Institute, 1908).

In Book I Browning tells of the discovery of the material, his prompt interest in it, and his rough plan of treatment, formed on the day of the discovery. The death of Mrs. Browning and his absorption in other literary projects turned his attention from the Old Yellow Book for a number of years; but in 1864 he resumed active work on it, and brought *The Ring and the Book* to completion in 1868. The first publication was in quarterly instalments, three books in each issue, beginning in November, 1868.

The plan is unique. The material is divided into twelve books. Of these the first is an amplified preface, introduction, table of contents, and list of *dramatis personæ;* Books II, III, and IV (Half-Rome, the Other Half-Rome, and Tertium Quid) are the comments and verdicts of Romans who knew the facts only by hearsay; Book V (Count Guido Franceschini) is the villain's testimony and plea in his own defense; Book VI (Giuseppe Caponsacchi) is the hero's account of the matter; Book VII is the heroine's narrative, made at the hospital in the interval between her husband's murderous assault and her death; Books VIII and IX report the lawyers' pleadings on either side; Book X is the Pope's review of the case and reflections upon it; Book XI is the villain's wild outburst of rage and last desperate cry for mercy before being put to death; and Book XII presents the aftermath of the crime and the trial—the gossip of Roman citizens and visitors, the lawyers' comments, and the struggle over the property of the heroine.

The train of events that led to the heroine's unhappy marriage, and ultimately to her death, is as follows: The Comparini, Pietro and his wife Violante, were a comfortable middle-

class couple living in the Via Villoria, Rome. They also owned a small suburban villa. Without children, they were in danger of losing a property that Pietro held in trust and which would pass out of the family if the Comparini died without heirs. Easy-going extravagance had involved them in debt.

In order to gratify her husband and secure the property Violante adopted the illegitimate daughter of a woman of the slums. This child—Pompilia—she palmed off on her husband as their own offspring. They reared the girl affectionately till she was thirteen. Violante then married the child to a decayed nobleman nearly four times her age, Count Guido Franceschini, who took her to his half-ruinous family seat at Arezzo. Pompilia's own story (Book VII) makes her relation to this sordid transaction very clear and narrates the events that followed so truthfully that further summary is unnecessary.

Page 380. **I take to intimate.**—Other editions print "imitate" for "intimate."

Page 396. **House.**—First published in *Pachiarotto and How he Worked in Distemper,* 1876.

Page 397. **"With this same key**
**Shakespeare unlocked his heart."**—The quotation is from Wordsworth's "Scorn not the sonnet."

Page 401. **Hervé Riel.**—First published in the Cornhill Magazine, 1871. Browning was in France at the time of the disaster of Sedan. He was deeply stirred by pity for the French victims of the war and devoted the money he received for this poem to their relief.

**On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two.**—The victory of the English and Dutch over the French at the Hogue, May 29, 1692. The ballad is based on fact.

Page 406. **Cline.**—Robert Cline (1725-1774), English soldier and statesman, the victor of Arcot and Plassey. By virtue of these victories and his administrative policy Cline is recognized as one of the founders of the British Empire in India.

Browning's poem narrates an incident of the first stage of Cline's career in India, when he was an obscure clerk in the service of the East India Company. This story (in Browning's

poem) is told by Cline himself a week before his suicide, to an old friend, who in turn recounts it to his son. The friend's comments serve as an artistic medium for the interpretation of Cline's character.

**He fought Plassey.**—Cline won the battle of Plassey in 1757, against the then native forces of the Nawab Suraj-ud-Dowlah and their French allies. This victory gave Bengal to the English and made it possible for them, rather than the French, to establish an overseas empire in the Indian peninsula.

Page 408. **He sustained a siege at Arcot.**—In 1751 Cline captured the city of Arcot from the forces of Chanda Sahib. These forces and their French allies reëntered the city and besieged the citadel which Cline occupied with a very small garrison of Sepoys and Europeans. In spite of his youth and inexperience and the heavy odds against him Cline was brilliantly successful.

Page 409. **What said Pitt?**—William Pitt, the elder, called Cline a "heaven-born general."

**Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff.**—As a consequence of disease contracted in India, and perhaps of the depression caused by political disgrace, Cline was addicted to laudanum.

Page 410. **Slaving at Saint David's.**—Cline was forced by the capitulation of Madras in 1746 to flee from that city to Fort St. David. There he continued as a clerk or "writer" for the East India Company till his disgust with the occupation and with political conditions in India drove him to take an ensign's commission in the army.

Page 430. **Development.**—First published in *Asolando,* 1889.

Page 432. **"What's this. . . .**
**That Wolf found out first?**—Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), professor of philology at Halle. He held that the Iliad and the Odyssey are compilations of hymns, not a single work by an individual poet.

Page 433. **The Stagirite.**—Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), born at Stagiria, author of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

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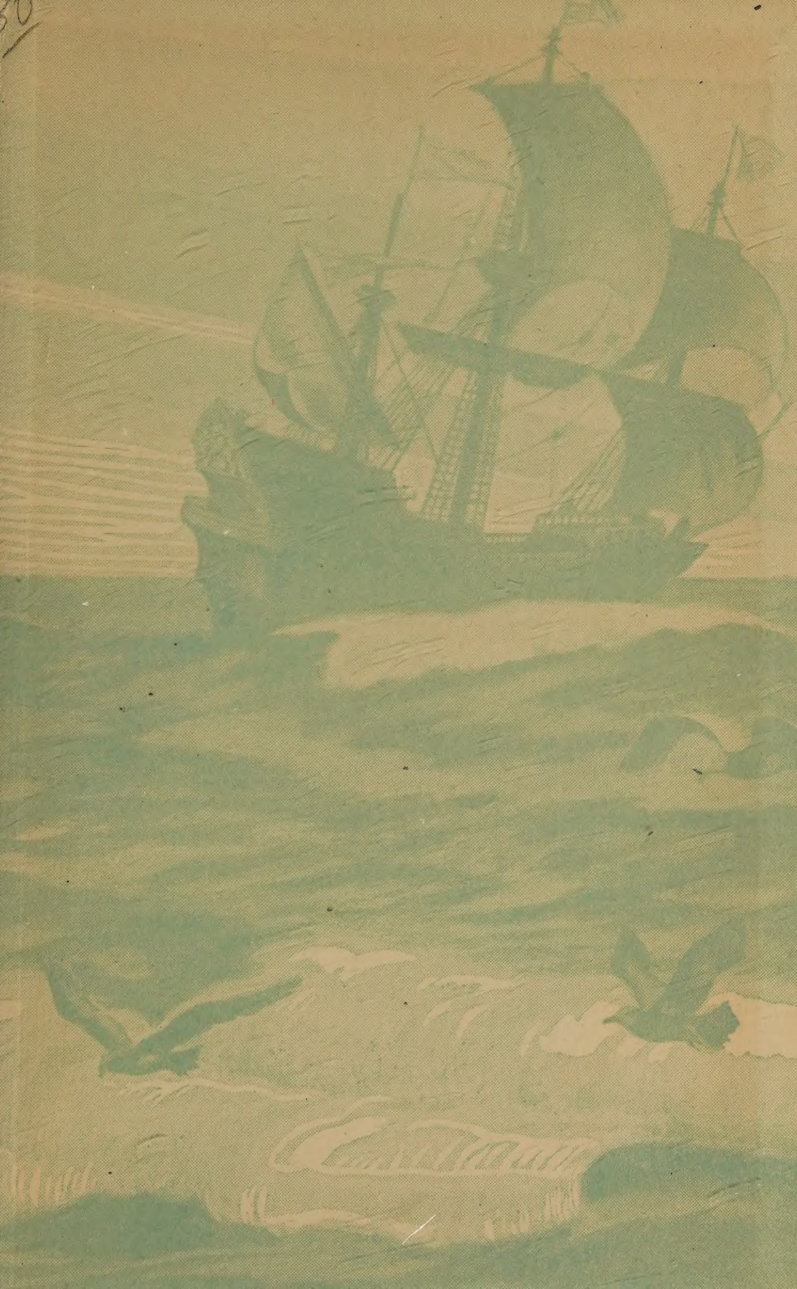
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